THE PENGUIN GUIDE TO

# VASTU

## THE CLASSICAL INDIAN SCIENCE OF ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

SASHIKALA ANANTH

'...whets the appetite of the open-minded reader and creates an interest in this exciting science' — *The Hindu*

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Sashikala Ananth holds a degree in architecture from the School of Architecture, Madras University. She has spent the last fifteen years assimilating traditional knowledge and exploring its field application. A recipient of the Ashoka Foundations Scholarship for innovative contribution to the field of architecture, she was also part of a team that made the 1991 award winning film *A Shilpi Speaks* that explains the tradition of the sculptor, and has published a book, *The Indian Tradition of Design Based on Vaastu Shastra*.

Ananth is a student of Shri Ganapati Sthapati, a leading authority on Vaastu Shastra and has also translated his text on iconometry into English. She has studied the Vaastu texts extensively and has worked with traditional artisan communities. She lives in Chennai where she works on projects incorporating the wisdom of Vaastu in creative and harmonious ways with the modern lifestyle.

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*May my speech, my expression, rest on my mind.*
*May my mind rest upon the speech.*
*With mindful attention let me speak.*
*O self-manifest Brahman, be thou revealed to me.*
*Let the truth of the Vedas be perceived by my mind*
*and through my speech.*
*May this learning not forsake me.*
*By the learning may the night and the day be joined.*
*I shall think the truth, and speak the truth.*
*May that protect me, may that protect the teacher*
*May that protect me.*
*May that protect the teacher.*
*Peace, peace, peace to all.*

–Aitareyopanishad

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# Author's Note

*In the beginning, all was Atman alone. He the Atman created the worlds. He then raised the Purusha from the waters and fashioned him thus: He brooded over the Purusha and there burst forth the mouth from which proceeded speech, and from speech fire. The two nostrils appeared and from them the power of smell, and from smell air. Eyes appeared and from them sight, and from sight the sun. Ears appeared, and from them hearing and from hearing the directions. Skin appeared and from it hair, and from hair herbs and trees. The heart appeared and from it the mind, and from the mind the moon. The navel appeared and from it the down breath and from down breath, death. The generative organ appeared and from it the seed, and from seed water.* Aitareyopanishad (Ch.1, Sec1.)

Before taking the reader into the subject of vaastu and its application in the field of building and design, I would like to share some of my personal experiences which led to my initiation into this tradition.

My understanding of the tradition of vaastu is as a result of many events that have taken place in my life. These events not only helped in developing my belief system, but also made it possible for the blessings and luminosity of the tradition to enter my consciousness and become the focus of my life. Vaastu and its universe of thought are more recent occurences in my life, but

prior to this the rudimentary steps had already been taken to understand the holistic universe of Vedanta and the Indian mind within the larger matrix of which vaastu, yoga, ayurveda are subsets.

I have had to travel back to early childhood encounters which have independently uncovered the secret and wisdom of the universe of reality and revealed the connections between event and response within every individual's life. In the last few years I have revisited many of these moments of deep clarity to better understand the science and philosophy of vaastu.

The earliest memory I have is of the deeply compassionate eyes of Yogi Ramaiah, who would come from Ramanashram every once in a while. He would sit with the children in our family, distribute sweets and laugh at our pranks. He never spoke a word, but to me his was the most beautiful and loving face. I must have been 7 or 8 years old then. To this face was added the wisdom of J. Krishnamurti who provoked and evoked the self-reflective part of me, which over the years has strengthened into a non-judgemental witness. Thus, it is from this location of a witness that I am viewing my revisit into the tradition. Over the years the two parts of my identity, the 'witnessing self and the 'creative self,' have been crystallizing the worldview essential for both a healer and a designer. This book is a first offering which gives a comprehensive view of vaastu as 'an aesthetic, healing space'.

Many years earlier (perhaps when I was 12 or 13), I recollect attending a lecture on Aitareyopanishad. I do not remember the entire talk or the speaker, but one moment of startling awareness during that one-hour talk is still capable of silencing my mind. It was as if the entire wisdom of the Upanishads spoke to the still centre of that child and the mind was briefly illumined. The

same passages mean something quite different today, but at that moment in my past it was as though something stood still, and a door was opened. The same child experienced the beauty and simplicity of Sri Kanchi Paramacharya's smile and felt the benediction for a brief while. Perhaps, all these years, this identity has been struggling to open that door again and let in the wisdom of the ancients to illuminate the human consciousness.

A part of my identity savours these meetings with such men of wisdom as if with a beloved.

Over the years through yoga and through silent contemplation of the infinite space within myself, I have pondered over and reordered much that the 'child-I' comprehended so spontaneously. All this understanding would have remained merely a deeply human and spiritual dimension of my identity had something cataclysmic not happened when I became an adult. The doors of a new vista were opened to me when I was introduced to the universe of the traditional sculptor/builder or *shilpin* through the skill and knowledge of Sri V. Ganapati Sthapati. I walked, breathed and studied this fascinating world for ten years. Through this interaction I was finally able to anchor the imponderables into a physically measurable universe of beauty and form. To me this act of making visible the mystic understanding of the earlier years has been a logical conclusion to a journey which has fused the inner revelations with the external manifestations. Ganapati Sthapati has helped me cross this river which began as a search and is now a mission. I offer my grateful thanks to all these guides who have showed me the way.

# Introduction

There are innumerable mythological stories that speak of the connections existing between the individual and the larger living systems, of action in one context which resonates and manifests in another place and time. To understand the nature of practices and principles of this subcontinent, therefore, one must look deeply into the psychological and spiritual universe of its tradition.

The Ramayana is a good starting point. Probably one of the most powerful stories in the life of a people, this epic has lived in the minds and hearts of Indians for over a thousand years. The spiritual teachings, ethical and moral values put forth by it have not only moulded generations of people but also influenced other Asian cultures for hundreds of years, besides forming part of art forms such as poetry, dance, drama, music, and harikatha.

The Ramayana is the story of an Avatara Purusha or exemplary man with divine qualities. This is a story of heroism, duty, banishment, abiding love, loyalty, of a saviour and a redeemer, of the tragedy of greatness that is undone by arrogance, of parental love that defies time, of a man-woman relationship that is eternal and so on. One can speak endlessly of the varieties of themes and richness of meanings that the Ramayana contains. A conversation between Narada and Valmiki brings out the quintessence of the divine qualities of Rama:

> *'Is there a man who combines all that is noble and kingly with the qualities of compassion and gentleness?'*
> *'Hear the story of Rama, who was powerful and heroic, intelligent and just, courageous and compassionate, righteous and gentle, and at all times pleasing and affectionate in manner, loved by all people.'* Valmiki Ramayana (Ch.1, Sec.1)

When individuals encompass many layers of understanding within their personality, they respond to the deeper call of a people and of a civilization.

As the son of a king, Rama was the embodiment of both—the dreams of the father and the urges and desires of the people. He lived the life of a perfect son and a perfect king but simultaneously carried out the dictates of a divine birth to rid the land of its evil energies.

The negative karma acquired by his father, Dasharatha, through an act of carelessness in his early life had to be lived through. Having separated a devoted and beloved son from his parents, Dasharatha was punished by being deprived of the one joy central to his life—his eldest son, Rama. This terrible pain of parting from his son was too hard to bear and Dasharatha died of a broken heart. Rama being the lord Himself, was powerless to change the course of his father's karma. Neither could he help his wife Sita in her struggle to maintain her innocence for she too had to live through the actions of her past.

Thus the complex tapestry of the Indian worldview maintains that individual lives must go through their own courses, and cannot be either stopped or diverted even by the Lord himself. The social life of the people has its own logic and meaning, which must also be

attended to in its own layer. Oftentimes, in the mythology of this land a divine spirit is seen in its multiple manifestations amongst ordinary people. This guiding spirit may be present as Krishna the charioteer, or the hunter Shiva—each having their predetermined part to play in the movement of the story.

The imperatives that define the life of man in his relationship to the world around create their own patterns which must be taken to their logical end. The wisdom of the forefathers which is applied through medicine, yoga, architecture, alchemy, mathematics, chemistry, agriculture, dyeing, weaving and astronomy have affected the life of a people as well as created bodies of knowledge that have been safeguarded by communities for centuries on end. But this knowledge is not isolated from the body of the larger cultural entity. Pragmatism and philosophy have been constantly stressed so that the individual may abide in the here and now even while contemplating the timeless wonders of the universe. Within the life of everyone, the simplicity of everyday action reveals eternal truths. To comprehend one aspect of the Indian mind is to delve into the entire field of perception. There cannot be an understanding of vaastu without understanding yoga, ayurveda, jyotisha, natya, sangeeta, Vedanta. Even though each individual field of study has its own rigour and logic, it is profoundly connected with the entire framework of living. Till thirty years ago, Indian mathematicians were competent musicians or astrologers, designers were healers and agriculturists were philosophers.

This book attempts to build the larger framework of the Indian perspective which draws meaning from both concept and action simultaneously. This holistic nature of the universe is the strength of Vedanta, which cannot be separated into classicism and folk or knowledge and material manifestation.

Vaastu is both an idea and a form. The built environment can be an object, a space and an experience. The subtle movement of the one into the other, when paradoxes become revelations, where dance transforms space into stillness, where equilibrium promises endless energy; in that twilight which is neither darkness nor light, where healing is concealed within the organism waiting to be liberated, let us walk and learn together.

# 1

# Vaastu—An Overview

Vaastu as it is being called today was known as the Vaastu Shilpa Shastra until a few decades ago. The principles of this shastra (scientific treatise) are contained in written texts known for their in-depth analysis of all aspects of building and sculpture. There are at least sixteen known texts written in Sanskrit and a host of local texts in different languages. Some of the texts offer more information on iconography and iconometry, some also offer information on simple rituals in community life.

## VASTU AND VAASTU

The vaastu tradition is an extremely old one and has developed its entire system of building technology upon the fundamental premise that the earth or soil is a living organism out of which other living creatures and organic forms emerge. The life force contained within the earth is called *vastu* by the tradition. This premise is extended further, and all objects that occupy the earth containing this life energy are likewise called *vastu*. Thus plants, trees, buildings and sculptures are all considered to be alive and part of the whole living subsystem. Each substance or *vastu* is also placed on a plane or support. This plane is called vaastu. The earth is both a *vastu* and a vaastu since it is a substance as well as a support. Vaastu is further explained as the living space (*vas*

means 'to be' or 'to live') or dwelling space.

Vaastu is the individual site or land identified for a village or neighbourhood. Vaastu is also the building enclosure. In practice, the individual site is known as vaastu and the built form is known as *prasada vaastu* (building enclosure).

The earth nurtures all plant forms and other flora. The tradition considers earth a primary mother goddess while the life energy contained in it is perceived as a male principle. This energy is known as *vaastu purusha*. Similarly the human organism is also a *vastu* within which there lies an energy which is known as the *jivatman*. The energy that lies in its unmanifested state in all universal space is known as *paramatman*. This name denotes the live energy residing in every particle of universal space.

This *purusha* or life energy has taken on various physical forms to reside in this world. Each of these forms abides within a natural rhythm and order. The traditionalists have understood this order which is alive and in harmony with the natural rhythms of the universe, and they have invested all their creations with it. As a result of this impeccable adherence to the natural order, sculptural images and built spaces have been created by the vaastu tradition, which to this day invite human beings to enter their spaces in humility and love.

When sacred spaces are carelessly disturbed and the natural order ignored, negative energies are unleashed which cause harm to the offenders. This is no different from tampering with poisons or electrical energies. There are countless stories in this tradition about the untimely end of those who destroyed temples and Divine images. To mitigate the negative effects of the energies in the environment various rituals are carried out that link man with the unmanifest universe of the *purusha*.

## AKASHAM, KAALA AND SHAKTI (SPACE, TIME AND ENERGY)

Man does not inhabit this earth alone. He lives amidst other natural forms and is in touch with energies and elements that are perceptible and beyond perception. He inhabits *akasham* or space. He is linked with his shakti or energy to other energy forms. He is part of a movement, a cycle of life and death which is known as *kaala* (time).

Space, Time and Energy are traditionally perceived as existing in their free, unlimited state. This is the absolute state. At this level, the movement and quality of the three is only an abstraction and an amorphous experience. For the purposes of making Space available in a way that would be comprehensible, it needs to be defined or limited. To make Time meaningful it needs to be held within the constraints of the past, present and future—the time of being, becoming and dying. This is the context for change and growth. So that Energy is recognized and used in a manner that is conducive to well-being and comfort, it needs to be disciplined and anchored within the space and time-frame of human existence.

Within the framework of all the classical arts of this country, the disciplining of these three absolutes has been carried out through the application of rhythm and order. When space has been transformed into form, time anchored into the here and now, and energy tuned to the natural energy flow of the human being thus establishing an organic link between the individual and his environment, we can say that the human and natural environment as well as the universal order are in harmony.

To this end, the Vaastu Shastras have not only devised an order pertaining to the creation of manifested

space, but have also ascertained a definitive link between time cycles and the life of a person. The inward and outward balance of energies results in a serenity of the inner self of the individual, and a harmonious symbiotic flow with nature in the outer consciousness. Both the inner and the outer states of being have been taken into consideration in all aspects of human existence, be it with regard to the placing of a dwelling, an image, or the size and position of any object within the matrix of human society.

Out of the movement of energy in space, the human being has evolved form. The tool for the expression of energy is derived from the rhythmic vibration of effort which is numerical and orderly. This is known as *taala*. The application of *taala* is by way of linear measures which facilitate the creation of form.

All kinds of material objects and manifested forms are created out of the synthesis of space, time and energy. Traditionally, the creation of sculptural and architectural forms is perceived as identical in nature. Sculpture or *shilpam* is the creation of form within space. Architecture or *prasada* is a *shilpam* containing space. In both, mathematical order is brought into use to create forms that are visually and inwardly pleasing. The inner order of the vibration produces the outer order of the manifested form.

*Prasada* is the ultimate expression of numbers, the zenith of mathematical application. Sculptures that represent human rhythm, and those that transport the individual into a divine level are both part of a human reality. They are then separated into his everyday transactional space and the space from which human beings obtain their spiritual well-being.

The temple becomes the logical centre of a human collective wherein the individual gathers his/her spiritual sustenance, and it also ties individuals at a social level.

The home or individual dwelling, which represents the physical well-being of people, also nurtures the spirit of the occupants, since it is here that they evolve their personal strength. Thus, no space is separated from the other in exclusivity. There are multiple qualities contained in each, and experiences of different people and diverse moments are encouraged in the built environment of a collective.

*Tribal and folk architecture.* The wisdom of the architecture in practice in tribal belts and villages exists in the form of oral systems of thought. Much of the assumptions and concepts that I work with come from this oral tradition which remains faithful to the environment and needs of eco-sensitive communities. Vagaries of fashion and consumeristic demands are relatively few in this system and therefore it has an unspoilt wholesomeness which has helped me evolve a comprehensive framework for the understanding and application of vaastu in a variety of situations. In a nutshell, the philosophy I have evolved for myself is:

> *With simplicity, in mud, brick, thatch and tile I anchor my physical being in this world of reality. With stone and brick and mortar I celebrate the spirit of the cosmos and hope to anchor the Divine in our midst. Let the reality of the physical environment and the splendour of the spirit ever present in our minds and hearts join and integrate and make our life a meaningful one.*

## THE BUILDING PROCESS

The process of erecting a building and setting out an interior are essentially an instinctive activity. Every life

form whether living on land, water, or air must create its own habitat. To ensure that lifestyles and habitats blend, different species have evolved their own special awareness to receive feedback about the environment and respond accordingly to the special needs dictated by the activities of the collective and the individual. The outstanding criteria that influence a living species in its choice of habitat are the availabilty of food, safety from predators, protection from the elements and access to building materials. Some activities of habitat building are individual effort, some are familial, team or group efforts. In some societies of human beings, this community activity of house building can still be seen (for example, the adivasis and other tribals). They make use of locally available materials in a location suitable for their lifestyle, with access to food, water, fuel, hunting and sowing grounds. When there is a cycle of plenty they celebrate and offer to the gods, and when there is a dip in their fortunes, they pray together and manage their sorrow.

But what is the contemporary counterpart in cities doing? Even as people become more 'civilized', 'acculturated' and 'progressive', they are losing touch with their environment. Critical survival issues are being marginalized, and hedonistic pleasure-seeking occupies centrestage. What is happening to the human mind? Many severe critics are predicting the rapid downfall of humankind and the total destruction of the earth's bounty in this process. In its desire to possess, the human race has consumed and laid waste the very source of its sustenance.

Increasingly, the most spontaneous response of people when confronted by the wisdom of the traditions that have been sustained and nurtured by their forefathers is predictable. The questions they ask of themselves are not, 'Can I in my lifetime comprehend

the wealth and richness of this knowledge?' or 'Will this tradition continue through me to my children's children?' Oh no! most definitely not. What is being asked in every corridor of power and upward mobility is, 'Can I convert this knowledge into a personal resource for amassing further wealth?' or 'Can this knowledge, ultimately, finally remove all my problems and give me endless happiness, add to my strengths, and offer me solace and . . .?'

This book is in response to both these crises, the one where the known world and the certainty of our lives is being threatened and the other where limitless greed and insensitivity is pushing us all into asking for too much. Let me start this book with a simple statement:

When times are grey and unendurably painful, when joys are flowing and we cannot hold on to them, at those moments remember we are connected to a larger order which speaks to us softly. Listen attentively and perhaps peace will come.

The tradition of the Vedas has offered solace to the disturbed and the pained by providing verses of celebration to the environmental energies in the form of gods and goddesses.

> *By chanting the Gayatri Mantra which relates to the purifying Soma, the holiest of the devas and by immersing the body in holy waters, a pious person is freed from sins.*
> Rig Vidhana of Saunaka (Ch.3, V.1,2)

## DIRE PREDICTIONS IN VAASTU

When a person approaches a professional and says, 'I know what I want, I have the money, you have the know-how, so design and build for me,' then the brief is very clear.

When a person says, 'Listen, I am confused, I need a space for happiness and well-being, so help me achieve this in a way that makes sense,' then too the brief is clear. The role of the designer in both instances is to achieve a result that satisfies the client using the learning that has been acquired at university.

But when such clear-cut parameters are not available in either the client or the designer then what do we turn to?

A person walks into a house and even without being asked to, sits down. He calls the woman of the house and says to her, 'Madam, I am a vaastu expert, and I can assure you that the location of your door and the position of your well are going to bring about serious calamities. Listen to me and make the corrections, you may even become a widow if you are not careful'.

This incident is a real one and happened to someone I know. Does the serious person say that, knowing the 'apparent' ill effects of vaastu, the man was perfectly within his rights to walk into a stranger's house uninvited, and speak of extremely violent future happenings? Do we condemn the woman (and of course her poor absent husband) for having built something without considering negative effects? Or do we recall that in all aspects of our traditions whether yoga, vaidya or jyotisha, it is important to draw a line between what the visionary can actually 'see' and what he/she should articulate? For should we not consider the thin dividing line between what can happen and what can be made to happen through wish-fulfilment and hypnosis? In general, there is an unwritten rule of conduct that even dire predictions must be held in check and not articulated (must not even be owned up completely) lest they might be made to happen.

In view of all this, should we then let such incidents

remain unexamined as a part of the misuse of knowledge?

I would like to take up a different and alternative approach to this extraordinary problem of uninvited (sometimes invited and gladly received), obstructive and doomsday predictions regarding buildings. Such predictions usually work on the emotions of fear and desire in the ordinary person making him/her vulnerable to the manipulation of unscrupulous practitioners.

## THE DILEMMA OF A DESIGNER

The desire in the average persons to encounter only positive happenings in their life is so high that any possibility of something negative, dangerous and uncomfortable pushes them into a tailspin. They flit from charlatan to magician to faith healers for help in managing the anxiety. Everyone in their rational moment 'knows' that this wheel called life will move up and inevitably come down. For some of us, the down seems longer, for some others the up seems out of sight—but almost everyone finds that 'others' seem to have more good things than themselves. This is an old pattern where the individual assumes a location of deprivation and envies the luck and happiness of some others.

To illustrate the conflict between the principles of vaastu and the expectations of its customers, there are two instances I would like to cite here. There was a client with whom I was working. After I had designed his interior layout and all the changes had been made to the existing office space, I offered to correct his entrance door through *ayadi* calculation for added benefits. He immediately asked, 'What can you offer me?' and I replied, 'Well-being, achievement, prosperity, friendship, spiritual satisfaction.' To this he said, 'I want only prosperity. I am running a business and who needs

friendship.' I almost blurted out, 'If that is the attitude with which you run your business, you are in for trouble,' but held back. Instead I said, 'I can offer you some stability in your income, such as a good proportion between expense and income.' 'How much?' he barked and I said very mildly, 'About 1:3.' To this he replied, 'I am already making 1:5, less than 1:10 is no good for me.' This time I could not stop myself. I told him, 'Hey, listen, I do not offer more than 1:3 or 1:4 because I think that a profit margin greater than this is unethical. There must be a limit to how much you can keep taking without replacing. Some day, you will pay the price.' I make it a point not to work with clients like this. It was much later that I heard that he was on the run for embezzling public funds.

In the other incident, the parents of a particularly bright boy consulted an 'expert' to locate his study table in such a way that he may be assisted by the right energies to top his class, achieve a university rank and so on. Now, every parent wants the best for his/her child, but what happened to good-old-fashioned effort? The contemporary attitude seems to be a strange combination of hope and opportunism, of desperate one-upmanship and blind belief. It is a fact that each of us can achieve a certain degree of excellence in our work when physically located in a certain way. However, the location and the person must blend with and enrich each other and this is possible only when certain conditions of intense self-awareness are fulfilled. For this awareness to be realized other aspects of our lifestyle—such as diet and exercise, right goal-setting, an awareness of self-worth and so on—should be disciplined too.

How can one hope to achieve all this through a forcible fixing of a location based on someone else's so-called expertise? At certain moments, when location

and activity become very focused, a deep self-awareness is created. It is possible to act from this awareness in satisfying and inspiring ways. But it does not automatically translate into either success or money.

Naïve statements like the following are normal follow-ups to this blind belief in the power of vaastu:

- If the vaastu is corrected then one can have male children.
- They should check the vaastu—they are falling ill.
- Losses in any sphere of life are ascribed to a 'faulty' vaastu.

Here we have three sets of unknowables which have got mixed up with one's desire for a home and place of work. Health, children and monetary profits have all become connected with a mythical 'good vaastu'. The building then becomes the place for a magical cure or, conversely, the inauspicious prison which depletes everything. The demands are for:

- Endless happiness with no threat of sorrow, a smooth passage through life, promising utter contentment, with no ripples at all.
- Limitless profits from every action. No risks, only continuous gratification. Fingers always dipping into the till.
- The desire to be a winner, the best, the greatest, but it must come without any personal struggle or even if there is struggle the fruits must be greater than the effort put in.

People expect magical results when certain corrections are made to their buildings or houses. It is expected that one will have wonderful children, make endless profits, be highly successful, have infinite money,

enjoy only happiness and love, never fall sick and so on. In response to such heavy 'market demands' you have the 'manufacturers' telling you that the east entrance will bring this about, someone else promises the same with a north-east well, another says, 'Take away the coconut tree,' another blames the gravel mound outside your back door, and yet another says, place an image outside your door, and so on. When you cross-check, put it together in the form of a prescription list, what you see is utter chaos, oftentimes just absurd charlatanism.

The experience of the ordinary individual to the manipulations of the vaastu pundit can be compared to that of an individual *vis-à-vis* a doctor. I have a headache and I go to a doctor. He says, 'Take a pill it will go.' Never mind why I got the headache. Perhaps if I had stayed quiet for a while, not watched television or exposed myself to the heat, or stopped a frequent use of pills which may cause other problems, the headache would have been cured naturally. Many of us are not aware of simple remedies, such as staying quiet with oneself, which usually gets rid of most ailments. We prefer taking the unnecessarily painful route of controlling the symptoms and messing up the physiological system.

What is this great terror of pain? On the one side we have a pattern of denial of both physical and psychological pain. On the other is the market response which offers magical cures to both.

Till a few decades ago, most families treated common ailments such as the common cold, low-grade fevers, upset stomach, headache, and body pain by employing dietary controls and herbal decoctions. It meant that the person went through a one week or two week treatment, rest, and restoration of physiological energy. But today everyone is demanding instant relief

by using drugs that are potent and sometimes harmful. This irrational demand is taking a severe toll on our well-being.

Vaastu is not about magical cures but about the physical, psychological and spiritual order of the built environment and its consonance with the energies of the cosmic universe.

When struggling to overcome sickness and confronted with a need to critically evaluate our lifestyles, do we want to take short-cuts, or do we want to stay with the intensity of our search? Do we run to an expert to get rid of our problem and effect a 'cure' or do we take a step to work with the whole psycho-physiological system so that a shift may take place towards 'well-being'?

We need to keep in mind that changes are effected only after a certain 'price' has been paid. When there is illness in an organism, the introduction of any medicine causes a re-assembly in the existing pattern. The existing relationships and energy patterns change and re-configure resulting in new dynamics of relationships. Both the known connections and the unknown changes cannot exist together. When the shift is made, the known configuration must be reassembled. There is some gain as well as some loss. Every shift must also mean a working-through with the organism while it is undergoing these changes. It is not a miraculous transformation, but a slow process of integration and restoration to an order. It is only through a meticulous preparation and working-through that benefits may be achieved.

It is also said in the Vedas that through purification, deep meditation and the chanting of some of the powerful mantras or incantations it is possible for the practitioner to be happy, healthy, safe and rid of miseries. For these benefits to accrue, the person must be pure,

clean, without envy, compassionate to living creatures, truthful, persistent and austere.

Intervention in the built vaastu can only be an action that takes into account the effect of this on the individuals and their interrelationships. The building is in fact the secondary system to both the natural energies and the human occupants. People keep changing and growing, energies change, shift and grow, but buildings remains static. Therefore, if spaces in a building are fashioned in such a way that its basic rhythm and order can contain change and growth then the building is adaptable. When generations of people can occupy it and mark it, and change it and not affect its 'health' or its 'vibrancy', then the building is timeless.

## HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

This book has been put together with a view to reach the people who are asking questions regarding their built environment as well as for those designers who would like to base their designs on the wisdom of the Indian tradition.

To facilitate a comprehensive understanding of the Indian worldview, the content of this book moves back and forth between theory and practice which are grounded on the philosophy, belief and experience of the traditionalists as well as my experience as a designer. Real-life examples both from the designer's handbook as well as from well-known traditional buildings have been juxtaposed wherever possible in the form of illustrations and data sheets.

A vaastu designer is often required to offer corrections, additions and modifications to existing buildings; restore and preserve historical buildings; design and execute individual as well as group buildings. This book aims to assist the designer in all three.

The whys and the wherefores that lurk in the minds of designers and the educated regarding the relevance of traditional forms of knowledge need to be addressed with seriousness and authenticity.

Can one design and create a building which will reflect the richness and variety of human life and which will allow the beauty and vastness of the cosmic order to permeate its space and enrich its occupants? If this is possible then what is the methodology by which such a sensitive design may be achieved?

Can additions be made which do not destroy the existing atmosphere or vibration? Though the addition would cause changes to take place, can this change be sensitive and capable of adding well-being to the occupants?

In other words, designing is an offering rather than only a professional service. Let us look into the rich heritage of the vaastu tradition and blend with it the wisdom of Vedanta with this purpose in mind.

# 2

# Design Concepts

The designing methodology which is adopted for any process of manifestation has its own rigour and logic. There is a strong relationship between the client, the designer, builder, specific site and the larger environment. There are several concepts that have been identified by the tradition for application in the design process.

## THE PSYCHE OF THE DESIGNER

It is stated that in all aspects of vaastu, yoga and ayurveda the personal serenity of the designer, teacher or healer is communicated in their work and through this it is possible to bring about a change in the consciousness of the other.

The order of the inner self manifests as the outer order and this in turn affects and shapes those who come in touch with it. Therefore, a design that is a manifestation of the inner order of an individual *must* influence those who come into contact with it. A house that has been built with a meditative response, out of a sensitive understanding of the environment and the inner order, will certainly sustain and benefit the users in their own life.

It is of utmost importance to remain attuned to the purity of the natural order for it enhances channels of creativity and brings about maximum joy and beauty

to people. This is the basis of all art forms, be it preparation of food, making a garden, bringing up a child or any other. However strenuous or burdensome the path may be, the vaastu designer must be deeply meditative and offer the design out of an inherent understanding of the natural order.

Thus, the following aspects are of prime importance and the basis of a personal process:

Inner order of the designer—rigour, discipline, creativity are all parts of the personal endeavour.

Outer manifestation—a product which may be in the form of a theoretical concept or tangible form is manifested from the creative effort of the designer.

Harmony in the user—the product should be capable of evoking a harmonious response in the user. The pleasing nature of the manifested form should evoke a positive feeling in the user.

The basic commitment is that each of us, in our chosen mode of self-expression, brings out from within ourselves deep inward tranquillity and order. In the moment of expression the artist within us, in all seriousness, ponders and expands upon the quality of the creative impulse and attempts to give it a form that is as close as is possible to its pure origins. In architecture, the offering is for the enhancement of the collective consciousness, for the inspiration of the people who inhabit the built space, and the act of offering a thing of beauty to another becomes an act of sublimation and self-knowledge.

## CONCEPTS

The abstract theories of vaastu can be applied in the building practice in a variety of ways. There are no finite limitations to the application and what is required today is an understanding of the concepts so that infinite

ways of employing them in changing contexts may be experimented by designers and promoters.

The critical criteria for the design of individual buildings, building clusters, interiors, landscape and art objects can be distilled as the following:

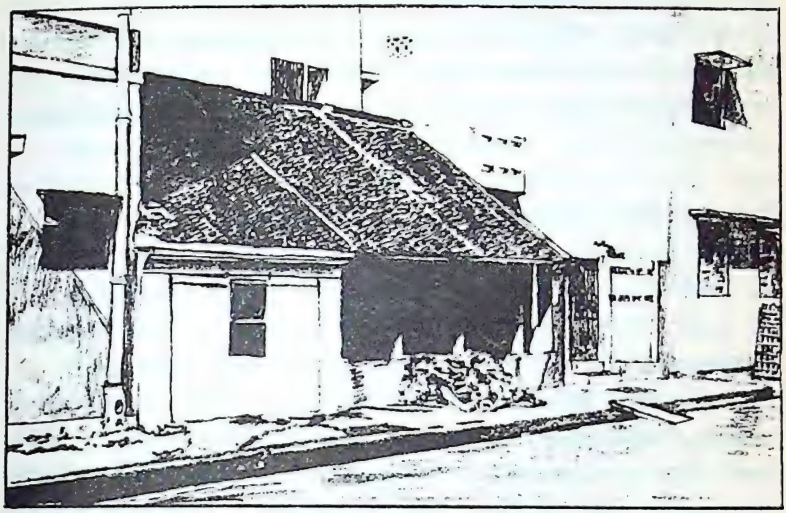
- Understanding of the function, aesthetics and spiritual well-being of the space, or response to built space.
- Comprehending the connection between the designer, occupant, uncontained space and the building, or form and centre.
- Natural environment and symbols.
- Significance of orientation.
- The importance of cosmology in the life of a people.
- The importance of shape, colour and size of the built form.

## 1. RESPONSE TO BUILT SPACE

In the field of vaastu, three principles of design have been put forth which cover the entire field of design be it a building, craft item or article of daily use.

*Bhogadyam*. The designed product must be useful, lend itself to easy application. For example, a house must have ample space for storage of articles and facilities for cleaning. A vessel must be designed in such a way as to hold water and allow for pouring out without leaking or dripping.

*Sukha Darsham*. The designed product, whether a building or a vessel, must be aesthetically pleasing. The proportions of the spaces and material shape should affect the viewer in a positive manner. This principle



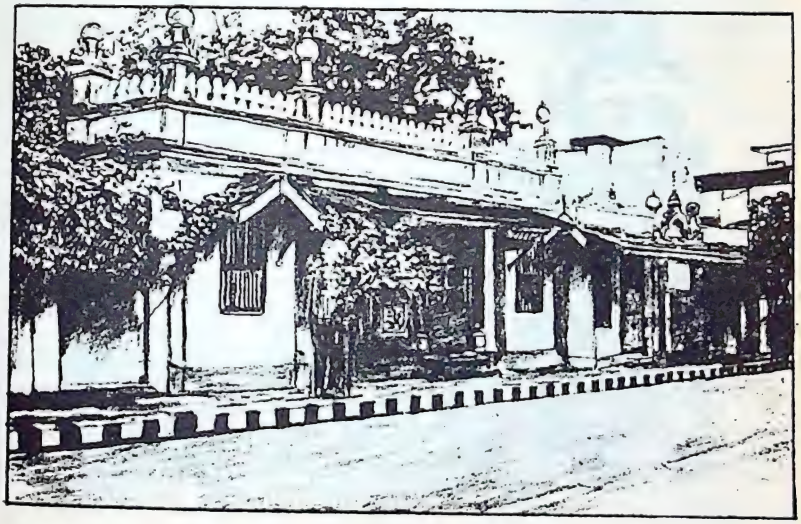


*Fig. 1 & 2. Examples of two typical street houses in south India, at Pondicherry and Kumbakonam (Tamil Nadu) respectively.*

covers the exterior of a building (or vessel) as well as the interior. Ornamentation and colour is just one aspect of aesthetics. The proportions of windows and doors, the size of rooms, the rhythm of projections and depressions play a critical role in creating the aesthetics of form.

*Ramya.* The designed product, whether a building for human habitation, a vessel or fabric, must be capable of evoking a feeling of well-being and contentment in its user. The measurements employed in the design, considered to be sacred measures, are juxtaposed in such a way as to create harmony in all those who occupy the space or use the object. We can say that 'a built form creates a sympathetic vibration in the occupant'. To calculate the proportions in such a way as to enhance the positive response in the viewer or

*Fig. 3. Traditional elements in a residence: Jassim house, Mumbai.*

occupant is the strength of the traditional design.

In a typical small townscape, street houses are functional and simple. In spite of the simplicity there is an attempt to create harmony and aesthetics in the individual buildings as well as in the street ambience.

Jassim House in Cuffe Parade, Mumbai is an example of a turn-of-the century building which has adapted various elements from different styles of architecture. But beneath the blending, there is a rigour and order to the design which makes the form most interesting and inspiring to the viewer.

The critical aspects of the design of a building should also include the aesthetics of both the exterior and interior space. When we examine the earlier residential buildings of small towns and villages in any part of the Indian subcontinent we become aware that all these aspects of *bhogadyam, sukha darsham* and *ramya* have been satisfied. Even the mud and thatch hut of rural origins creates a visual as well as a psychological impact of great beauty and contentment. It is only the 'modern' buildings that leave much to be desired.

## 2. FORM AND CENTRE

In yoga, there are several methods that are recommended to the seekers for attaining well-being and serenity. So also in vaastu there are multiple ways in which the designer and occupant can create a space for experience. Within the manifested form many focii must be established in a space meant for many people. But if the space has a specific activity, then gathering all energies in a single centre proves to be very powerful. The latter would be suitable for a place of learning, worship, manufacture and research. But in a home, a hostel, or neighbourhood, several centres, or

shifting centres is most inspiring and motivating. These centres can be in the form of open spaces, common gathering spaces filled with herbs, healing plants and sacred water, or a religious centre.

*Contemporary application.* The classical interpretation of the above mentioned concept has only a few variations. It is possible for us in the contemporary context to adapt this principle in varieties of ways which would be suitable for present-day lifestyles.

- A square or circle for the cooking and eating zone.
- A square or rectangle for the preparation and storage of food and clothes.
- A square or rectangle for sleeping, washing, bathing and resting.
- A square, rectangle or octagon for studying, recording, mind expanding, analysing and so on.

In the shifting centres, the relationship of each to the main centre (*brahmasthana*) should be constantly clarified. This connectedness would bring about the integrity and vitality of the collective space. It can be carried out in many ways and in multiple patterns. Each of these configurations would create its own abstract energy patterns and therefore give a definition to the collective spirit. Harmony can be achieved when an inherent order is built into the patterns through numerical rhythm and proportions.

A random placement of forms without balancing either individual unit with the larger space, or each unit with another makes the office layout in Senegal a very confused one. No anchoring of energies has been attempted. The impact on the occupants would quite probably be a mixed one. A nexus of activities would not emerge and the human collectives would remain

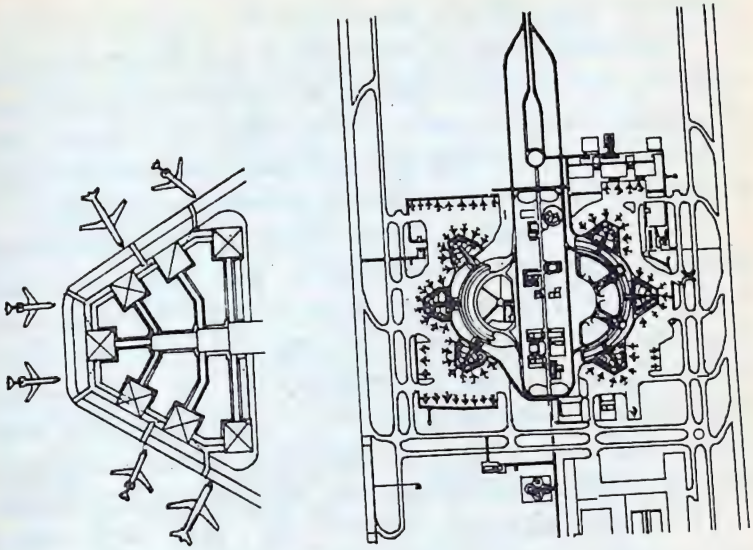


*Fig. 4. Layout of an airport in Indonesia.*

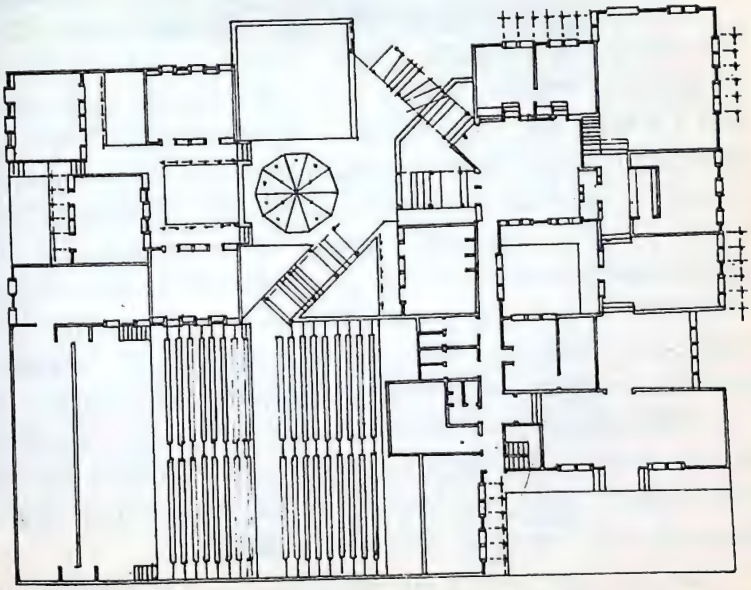


*Fig. 5. Layout of an office in Senegal.*

confused, isolated and distanced.

The airport layout, however, is a very different one wherein independent clusters have been integrated into an inward-looking configuration. Here the energies are focused into the central axis, and the form will definitely influence the occupants into a cohesive workstyle.

The Navi Mumbai layout offers a perfectly balanced solution with four separate units that blend to create four independent and one large centre. The centre for the entire layout has been left free and open. The users of this layout would be inspired to find independent rhythms and creative skills. As a larger collective they would feel comfortable in operating under a common banner without feeling any anxiety about the authority.

In the Chennai layout too the independent departments or teams would feel comfortable about their freedom. But the common umbrella would be a lot more bounded and focused. Authority would be felt consciously and may even be experienced as dominating.

When the composition of the locii resonates within the occupants in such a way as to enlarge, enrich or expand the consciousness, it can be said that the form and content are in a dynamic relationship. When this does not happen, it can be said that it is a static situation. In itself, both can be strategic design statements. But when, either through active intervention or by unconscious intent, energy is 'depleted' by the design, this form and content should be seen as 'negative' and must be changed. This intervention into 'negative' systems is what I call *Chikitsa Vaastu* (See Chapter 3).

Therefore, it is necessary to study the nature of the universe of the occupant—job, tasks, lifestyle, desires and dreams. Next, the nature of the intervention that a designer can bring in should be defined.

In my experience, the designer can only define the outer boundary and form. The occupant should be

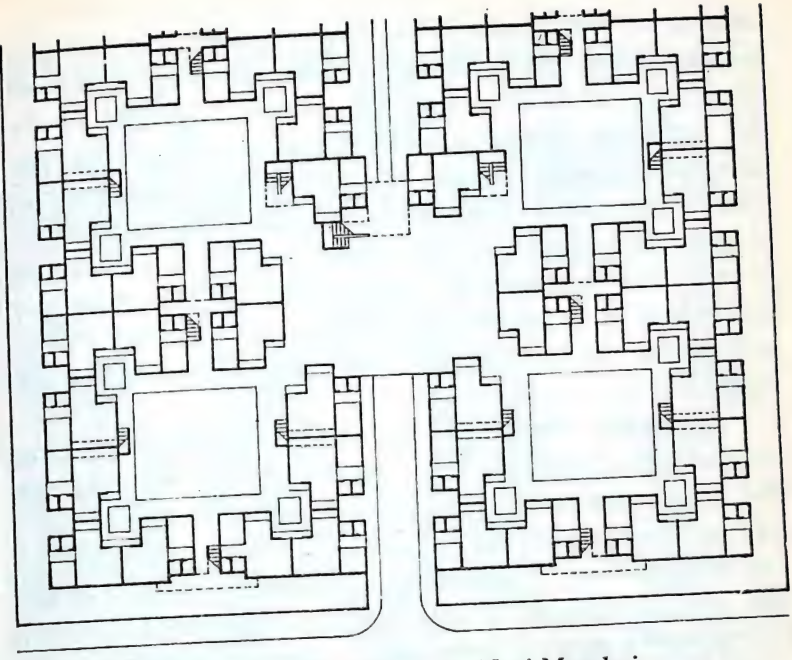


*Fig. 6. Layout for a housing cluster in Navi Mumbai.*

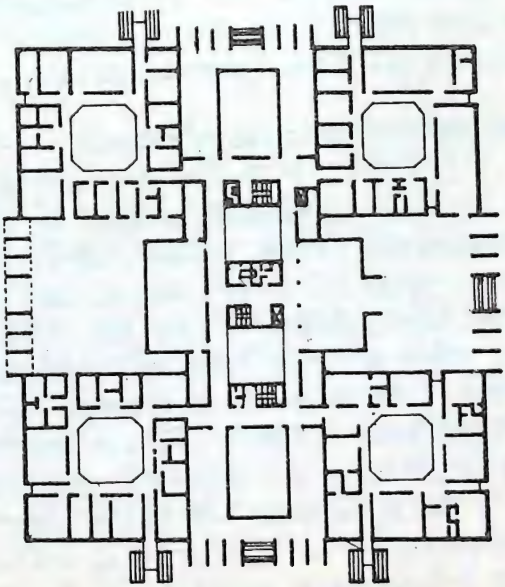


*Fig. 7. Layout for a training centre in Chennai designed by the author.*

assisted in the process of adding substance and richness to the space. The complete definition of the space or the filling of all its emptiness cannot be taken up by the designer. Doing so would suffocate the creativity and the *praana* or life energy of the occupants. In today's life every personal act of creativity and silence is being blanketed by the noisy, mechanical products of mass manufacture. As sensitive human beings deeply committed to traditional values we must assist in the process of discovering the substance and defining the form.

A simple house can be made unique by adding ornamental elements using readily available materials like white clay and glass pieces or any other from one's own environment. This creates a personalized aesthetic experience. Even in an urban situation it is possible for the users/occupants to add a distinctive touch to their buildings by getting involved in the actual design and execution of the building. This 'personal touch' gives a special aura to the building that can never be replaced by professional art work however tasteful.

## 3. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND SYMBOLS

The lotus is a very significant symbol for explaining form and aesthetics in the Indian tradition. Take the example of a pond filled with water, after the rains, with perfect lotus blooms among the floating green leaves. The pond is surrounded by undulating dunes, and it is there like a jewel, shimmering and perfect. This same form becomes totally different when the water has dried and the lotus lies above the squelching mud; then there is the other time late in the night when in the starlight the lotuses are tightly closed, and the surface of the pond is rippling in the darkness. In all this the pond, the flowers, the water, the environment are

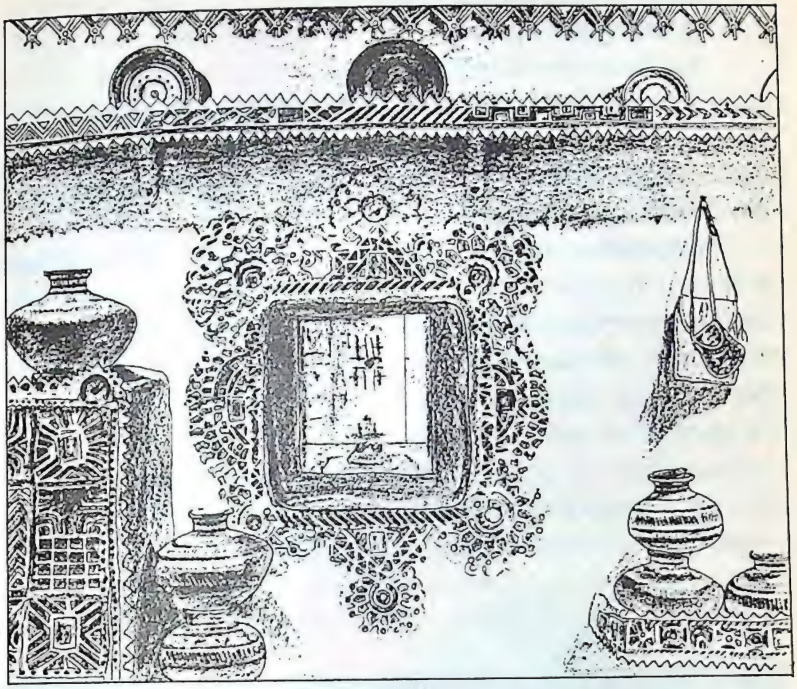


*Fig. 8. Ornamental work in mud house, Kutch.*

creating different patterns, in a variety of relationships with the space around. It is not possible to call one 'better' than the other; the entire process of unfolding from one form into another is perfectly balanced within and without.

The built form too can perhaps be like this—in relationship, in form, in the way the order is inwardly and outwardly expressed. In every stage of expression and evolution of a home there are multiple forms that can be achieved. When the form is a result of organic growth or movement of the basic elements then the result is capable of imparting aesthetic delight and contentment in the occupant. Some of the associations and connections between nature and concepts for building are:

Lotus–water–pond–environment
Bird–flight–skyline
Rock–earth–stillness

Trees, plants, waters, earth, the sky, are there for us to connect with—older, wiser, more in touch with the eternal 'being'. By connecting, by reaching out we are liberated, cleansed, and healed.

A warli painting depicts a folk-tale in a visual manner. It is a community's offering of a view of life which enriches and expands the consciousness of the members of the tribe. It is also a simple historical record of a people which reinforces the cyclical nature of human continuity as well as the irreversible connections of people and their environment.

In traditional buildings, for depicting natural forms, literary and mythological characters and philosophical meanings, symbols were utilized in both secular and religious applications. This method of creating

*Fig. 9. Warli tribal painting using rice paste on fabric.*

connections between the occupants of a built space and their heritage through symbolism and mythology is a very significant part of the tradition.

Representing large wheels at the base of a building is used to indicate the movement and vitality of the activities within it (the symbol of the chariot or *ratha*). Connecting the *mandapa* and subsidiary structures within the temple complex to the *garbhagriha* or sanctum through ornamental corridors is a method by which the symbolic connections between secondary philosophies to the core belief systems is visually represented. In Buddhism particularly, the prayer wheel becomes the connection between individual effort and the eternal nature of dharma.

The painting below shows the employment of subtle symbols to illustrate the esoteric connections of a community with the unmanifest energies of the environment. The female and male forces have been represented with implements and vehicles to help the individual comprehend the known and live with the incomprehensible.

*Fig. 10. A painting of goddess Kali with all her symbols.*

Goddess Kali is the mother-figure who destroys the monsters of darkness and violence, and protects human kind with her benevolence. The skull necklace represents the goddess' power over the pride of man, the drum in hand denotes rhythm and creativity, the snake spiritual powers and the loosened hair denotes the free spirit which cannot be bound.

In the contemporary social system it is important to review the need for the symbolic connection between people, their natural environment and the vast repository of human collective wisdom. Therefore, symbols and abstract representations which enhance the beauty and meaning of built forms need to be explored by designers.

In this ashram layout designed by the author, the circular plan would ascend to the finial in a series of domes reminiscent of Buddhist architecture. The vault and dome would be covered with earth over which grass and flowers would be planted.

With a view to enhancing its symbolic dimension, as in Buddhist prayer halls, this hall too would lead the devotee from the outside into a cavern, as if into the mountains. The light would be dim and mystic, the progression representative of the womb experience. The finial would have an ethereal/traceried bronze form through which rain water would penetrate into the hall, sunlight filter in and at night the lamp lights spread their glow outside.

In order to make the ashram perfectly proportionate every part of the design, be it the circumference, height, size of window, doors, height of walls or thickness of roof would be in rhythmic relationship with each other. The basic module of this design was decided and calculated for *ayadi* benefits (refer Chapter 7). All the measurements were then derived from this module.

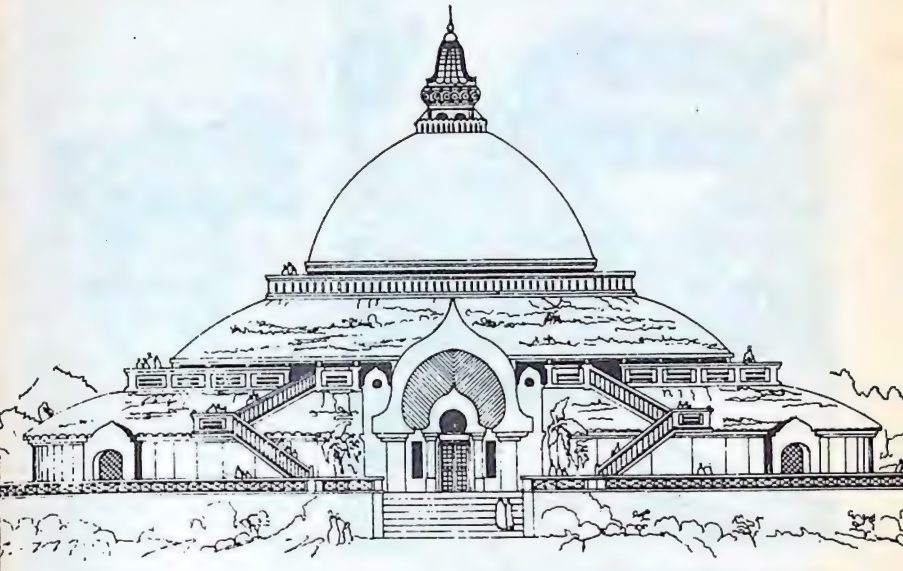


*Fig. 11. A design for an ashram prepared by the author.*

*Existing flora in the built environment.* There is some strange move amongst contemporary vaastu consultants to remove full-grown trees and plants on the ground of negative effects. The caution extended in the tradition *vis-à-vis* trees and shrubs has been very clearly based on the following:

- The roots and their disruptive effect on the foundation of the building structure.
- The danger of branches of large trees located near buildings falling on it in a storm.
- The impact of the fragrance of a plant or flower on the people inhabiting the space.
- The nature of animals and birds that naturally inhabit the flora, and their effect on human occupants. For instance, certain trees attract snakes,

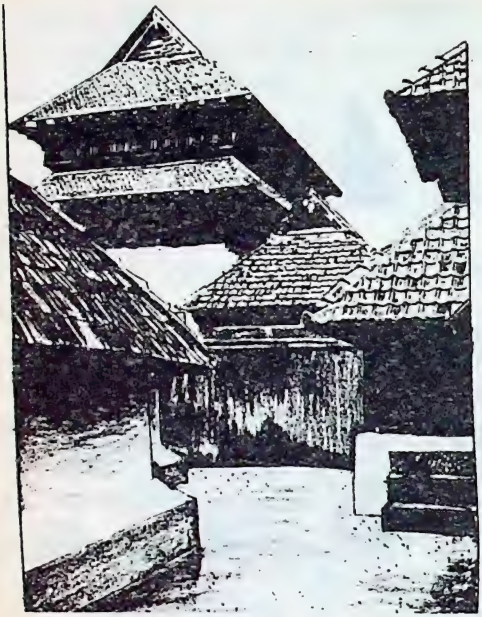


*Fig. 12. Padmanabhapuram Palace in Kerala.*

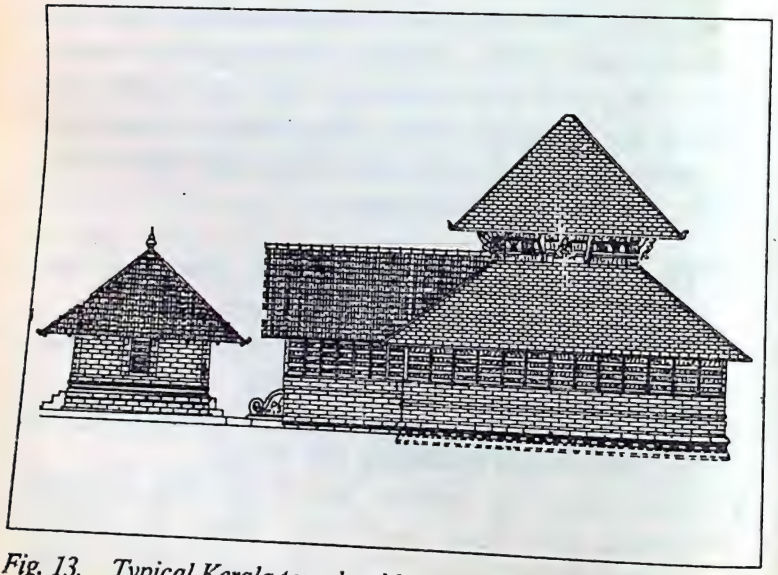


*Fig. 13. Typical Kerala temple with pitched roof, Anantapur Cannanore.*

scorpions, monkeys, and other such creatures which may not be suitable for the ordinary household.

Taking these precautions into account, my response to designers and to those building their homes, factories and resorts is that it is not necessary to get rid of a tree. If it does not harm the foundation, or is at a suitable distance from the house, the tree is the source of your energy. It *must* be there; learn to love it and learn from its tranquillity. Watch the seasons, the birds, the wind and rain in relationship to it. Let it be the resource for your journey into your own primary beginnings—not for status and praise but for the inward quest let nature lead you.

*Shapes and forms of habitats in nature.* The natural habitats of many of the living creatures such as bird nests, tortoise shells, snail shells, bee hives and so on, are closely connected to the shape and form of the creature who inhabits it. The habitat is also designed so as to best enhance the activity of the group in coordination with the environment. No bird would build a nest in the windward or rainward side, nor in the path of predators. Therefore any wisdom that comes down from the past which does not integrate the local needs and the constraints into its design solution cannot be either effective or functional.

There is a predominance of wood and clay tiles with steep slopes that give Kerala architecture its uniqueness as well as making it climatically suited to the west coast. The Sanchi Stupa, even after so many centuries, continues to attract the viewer with its perfection of proportion and simplicity of line. The materials used in it are brick and stone which have been handled with the great ease of master craftsmen who understood their material, and knew how to

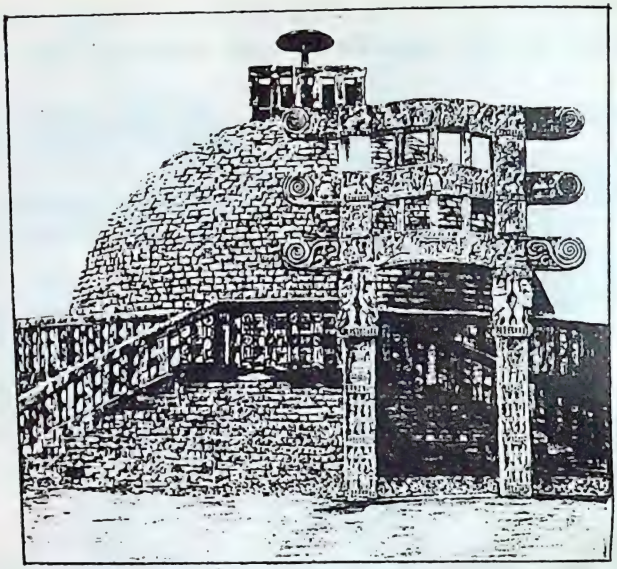


*Fig. 14. The Sanchi Stupa shows a perfect juxtaposition of forms.*

*Fig. 15. Bhima Ratha in Mamallapuram with vaulted roof imitative of tribal buildings.*

juxtapose form and space, light and shade, ornamentation and simplicity in the most effective manner possible.

Many building techniques applied in thatch and mud constructions were imitated in the permanent materials also. Examples of tribal and folk building method can actually be seen in the temples and palaces of later periods in history.

The Bhima Ratha is a monolith stone structure in the form of a vaulted hall recreating its more primitive hut form in an enduring material. Here too, the artist knew his material, the balance of forms, the drama of projections and recesses.

Tribal building techniques, village groupings continue to exhibit this sensitivity to the environment even today. The very basis of the vaastu wisdom is the ability to marry the temporal needs and deeper human aspirations.

## 4. ORIENTATION

Much work has been done on the psychological ramifications of choice-making, be it professional or emotional, mundane or metaphysical. In the traditions of this country, choice-making in matters such as postures, locations and directions is explained in a unique manner so as to foster both individual and collective harmony.

When each of us finds a location to sit in, stand, lean back, lie down, crouch, climb on to, we invariably do so 'spontaneously'. It is almost as though there is no time lag between a required location and the taking of it. It is only in rare instances that we hesitate before taking up a position—perhaps due to anxiety, fear, uncertainty and so on. Even in a normal, everyday situation if we take the time to examine and reflect upon our intuitive choice-making, we would be very

surprised to find a variety of factors actually influencing our conscious mind in its final decision. As we become more tuned to the process, we can also feel the various influences, and the intuitive responses from our system without in any way interfering with the final choice.

The geographical directions have played a very significant part in the design of individual buildings and group housing in the tradition. Many mythological stories speak of the hero walking to the east to find a teacher, or running to the south to confront death, or setting off toward the west in search of adventure, or walking to the north to become a healer. The physical environment affects human inhabitants in a direct manner. The energies that exist in the environment, on the other hand, trigger the tribal memory patterns within each of us and create psychical pushes and pulls which operate subliminally. The influence of these subtle energy patterns is not felt immediately but has far-reaching effects on the physical and spiritual health of a people.

5. COSMOLOGY

Any given physical space can be perceived in its connections with primary energies. The eight directions, the heavens above and the earth below are considered significant influences on the nature of growth and prosperity. The cosmology of the space depends a great deal on the dominant worldview of a people (further details in Chapter 4).

*Mandala or Mandalam.* The mandala is a representation of the cosmos through geometric forms whereby the living space is laid out in a variety of patterns. In the nodes and joints of the mandala, important locations are given for critical action within and without. The

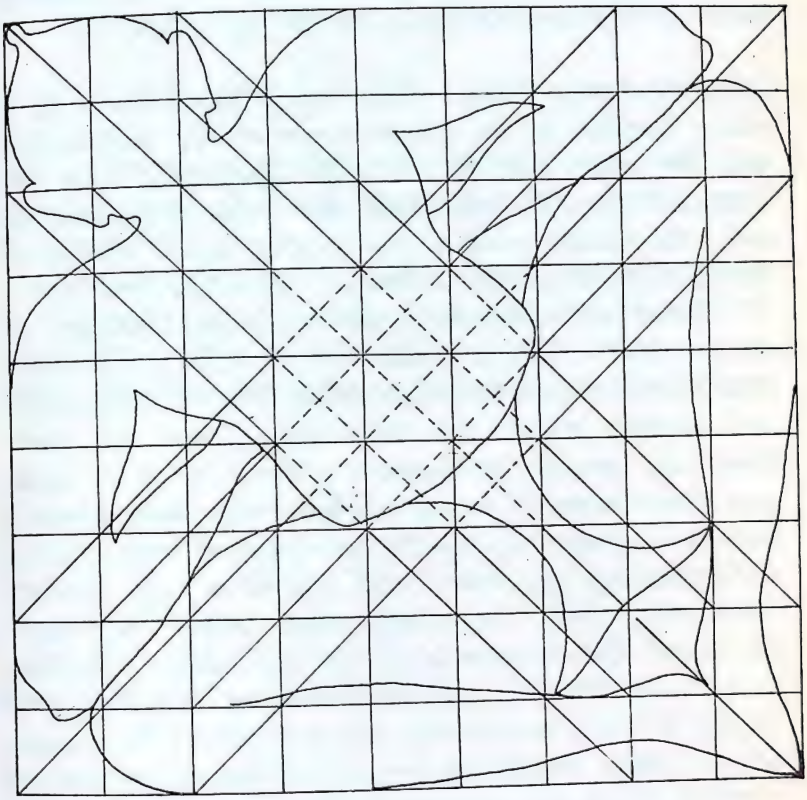


*Fig. 16. Vaastu Purusha Mandala.*

outer circle (or square) holds the gatekeepers, the inner the formless energies. This movement inward is a re-entry and rediscovery of the true spirit, and the outward movement a constant quest into the interface and relationship with the world outside. The inward is the timeless sublimation and the outer the conquest of *kaala* or the Lord of Time (details in Chapter 4).

*Fixed locations.* When I walk into a space, where do I locate myself? Is the consequence of my relationship with the room and its occupants dependent upon the location I take? Is there only *one* location available to me? Can I actually sense the location most suitable to me at different points of time, in different contexts?

When a person has to take up a fixed location in a space, like a seat or workstation or desk or any other, it is important that the relationship between the person and location should be established. There are times when the specific configuration would be at its peak, and times when it would be low. Therefore, when a person is placed in a particular location with a deep understanding of roles and identities and his/her relationship with the place, then he/she is deeply energized. Certain aspects of role and status of location or seat are common, but sometimes an individual may change it. There are some locations which are innocuous, neutral, which would suit one and all and add or remove nothing. These are locations for the non-risk takers. But when the overall pattern of a space needs to be affected, a much more comprehensive understanding has to be arrived at. What is the nature of the energy field that needs to be set up? Is it:

- Human-collective specific or individual specific
- Task specific
- Result oriented

- Safeguarding wealth
- Expansion oriented
- Adventure, innovation based

The direction in which a building is facing, the configuration of movement, and the location of facilities can create infinite patterns for people to inhabit.

6. SHAPES AND COLOUR

Most of the experimentation in shapes is done with the square, triangle, polygon, rectangle, circle, ellipse, oval, or free form.

Traditionally these forms have been analysed according to their suitability for human use. Some lend themselves better to physical use than others, some create spiritual well-being, others add to the energy

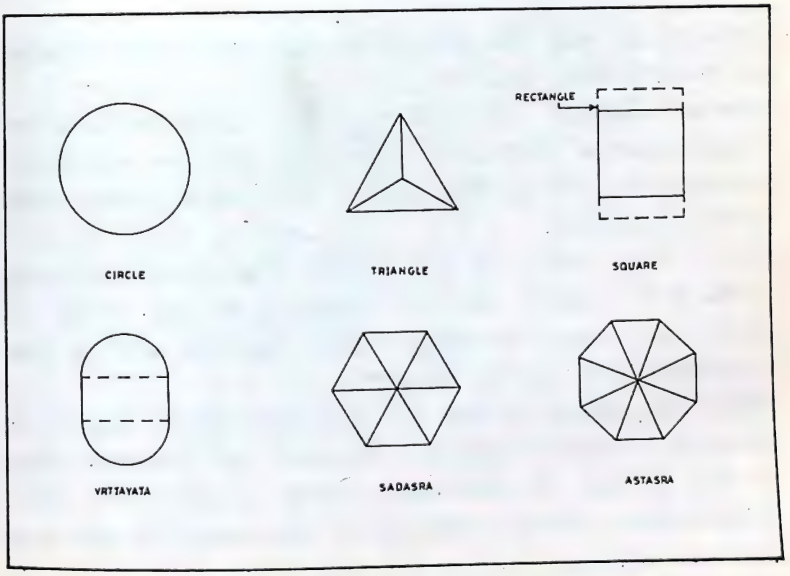



*Fig. 17. Shapes considered auspicious for field application.*

levels and so on.

There is no good or bad shape, only different levels of usefulness and comfort. For each of these shapes, *ayadi* or beneficial measure calculation can be made, and specific patterns of interactions built up based on the pattern of the interior. The choice of shape would affect the management style, lifestyle and activity patterns. The choice of aesthetics, colour, form, levels would have to be extrapolated in a harmonious manner with the shapes that have been chosen for the design.

Traditionally there were only five colours (*panchavarna*), namely red, yellow, green, blue, white. Black is also used, but only to enhance the other colours. Shades of colours were not used until recently. The traditional colours were made of natural materials and possessed certain properties that were intrinsic to the material. Therefore today, when these colours are being made artificially, the characteristics have to be re-examined.

*Crimson or red.* The colour of aggression and passion, celebration and joy.

*Maroon (kaavi).* The colour of the earth, and also of auspiciousness. The brick, the earth symbols, terracotta products are all in this colour. It is used a great deal in the tradition.

*White.* The colour of the moon. Traditional paintings employed a great deal of white. It is the colour of purity and piety, though it also denotes sorrow and widowhood in certain contexts.

*Blue.* The colour of the sky and the waters. This is an oft-used colour to indicate vastness and eternity. Blue as the colour of *devalòka* (astral universe) is often employed in tantric paintings to represent the spiritual states of being.

*Green.* The colour of plants, prosperity and fertility.

Green is used for creating a feeling of the vitality and fulfilment of earthly pleasures.

*Yellow*. This and ochre are colours denoting birth and growth. They are associated with spring. Yellow is an auspicious colour, and is employed to represent spiritual awakening.

*Black*. It is often employed to indicate counter-religious symbols such as black magic rites and worship of the lesser gods. It is also used to represent austerity and penance. Black in a limited application ensures the containment of negative vibrations in an entity, hence black thread, beads, bangles and so on.

## APPLICATIONS

In a built organism, be it a business office, educational institution, individual residence, residential complex, manufacturing unit or agricultural production unit, there

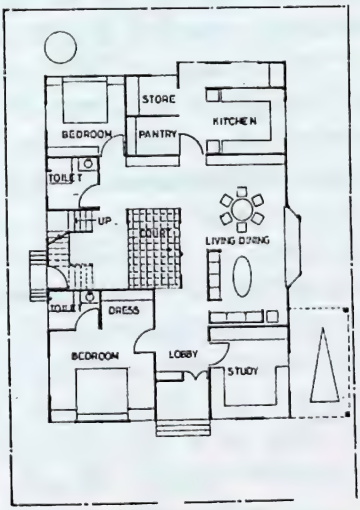



*Fig. 18. Residential design by the author, east facing.*

is a power or energy axis that must be identified and from this all the patterns must be extended.

Based on the understanding of an organization and the study of human collective behaviour it is possible to creatively reinterpret the traditional concepts in changing contexts. Let us look at some possible reinterpretations through layouts of residential buildings designed by the author.

Figure 18 shows an east-facing house which has a well at the rear (in the SW part), kitchen in the NW or *vayu* module, staircase in the S or *yama*, courtyard in *brahmasthana* or centre, study and *puja* in the NE or *isaana*. This is a residence for a healer who works with alternative healing methods for bringing about peace and well-being in the individual. The central courtyard shifted a little away from the central axis offers enormous energies that are not dissipated by the everyday interaction with the world outside. The kitchen in the *vayu* or air quadrant helps in spreading the nourishing energies of the owner without burning them away. The movement upward in the *yama* quadrant, into the first floor meditation hall, helps in purifying the participants through an understanding of death and life, before entering the healing chamber. There are three powerful axes in operation in this house, the E/W through front door to rear door, N/S from bay window to stairs, and up-down in the courtyard. Therefore, the light, the movement of air, the movement of *praana* (life energy) is constantly replenished.

In figure 19, the location of kitchen is in the SE, bedrooms in the SW and NE, *puja* in E, well in NW, staircase in SW. This is a conventional house for an ordinary middle-class family, which looks at the relationship of food and health as a private affair and may not be open to innovative interpretations. Therefore, the kitchen in the SE or fire quadrant was decided, so

that positive energies and well-being can come from known and predictable quarters. The axis of energy is closed with the *puja*, and therefore the *praana* is being held inwardly only for the family. This is an inward-looking, self-sufficient family.

Depending upon the context (interior, flat, office, residence, school), the mandala may be set out. In this way a variety of relationships can be established between internal points, outer form, elements in the open space surrounding the building, and the environment. This can provide much scope for creating an ambience for the inner and outer spaces.

An inward-looking philosophy of design would aspect all elements to the central core, wherein the landscape may also be turned inward for further enhancing the energy lines. Similarly a multiple aspect

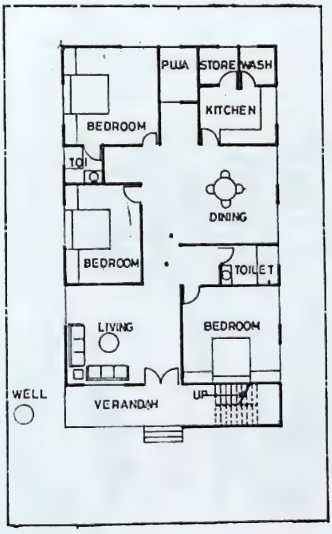



*Fig. 19. Residential design by the author, west facing.*

can also be created with two or three energy points

setting up a multiple experience (this would be suitable for a public building which allows for different experiences for different people), but still contain the rigour of the form without dissipating it. This is connected to the earlier analysis of multiple centres to a design. The very nature of the form is deeply connected to its centre and the outside space.

3

# Experience of Space and Form

A well-designed building, a well-constructed song, a well-ordered poem, a well-executed painting, are all very alike; each is capable of attracting and satisfying the observer or listener.

The illustration below shows two examples of craftsmanship in bamboo and reed. Here traditional craft technique has been adopted to contemporary needs in an innovative manner. These baskets are also very durable and easy to use which adds to their value.

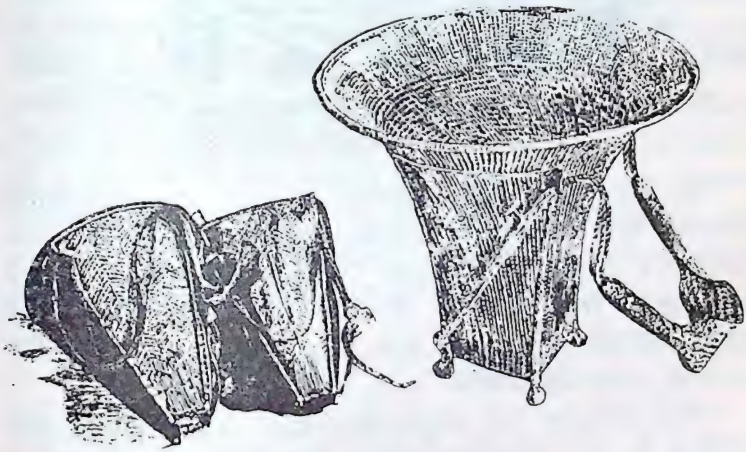


*Fig. 20. and 21. Beautifully crafted bamboo baskets called Agin and Kophi.*

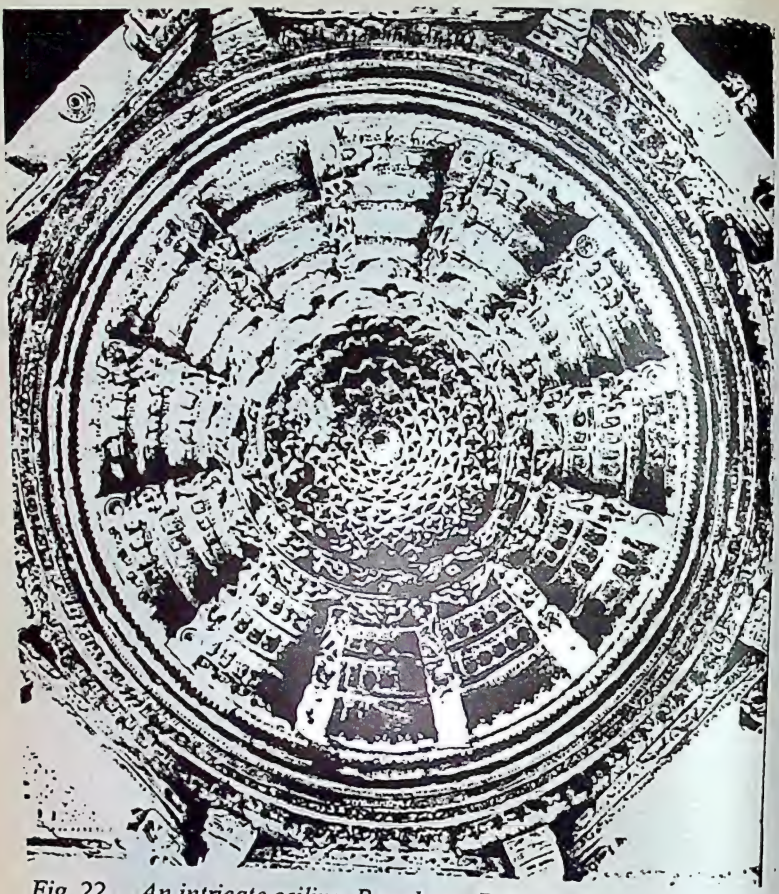


*Fig. 22. An intricate ceiling, Ranakpur, Rajasthan.*

In this beautifully crafted ceiling the structural elements are elegantly concealed within the ornamental work. For centuries people have gazed up at it and been awed by the skill of the unknown artists. The ceiling speaks to us of the wondrous nature of the heavens, creating within us a spiritual yearning.

The process of designing and constructing any building is no different from the task of offering a well-cooked meal, fashioning an exquisite piece of sculpture or singing a sensuous song. Each of these

actions embodies the artist's inner awareness and creativity, design elements and the skills necessary to make the attempt.

In architecture too, there are certain basic requirements that need to be fulfilled, namely:

- The artist's or designer's inner self, well-being and sensitivity that are part of the unconscious resources of action.
- The needs and desires of the client or consumer for the manifested object.
- The site conditions, neighbourhood, local rules, material availability, specifications, orientation, climate.
- The understanding of space, proportions, form, relationship of building to the open space around the building.

The traditional design process consists of an integration of six critical factors or principles of design which were dealt with in the earlier chapter. The *praana* or life energy of the building relies on the designer's ability to safeguard the subtle energy lines and vital points of the built space. The cosmology of the building legitimizes the psychological and cultural connections of a people. It is through the blending of the *praanic* energy and the sanskriti or cultural belonging of a people that the physical, psychical and spiritual well-being and health can be taken care of.

## PERSONAL PHILOSOPHY

Each of us in our profession must have a personal philosophy of thought and action to be able to achieve equipoise inwardly and outwardly. In my life I have held as personal philosophy the process of integration

between traditional wisdom and innovative action.

A person can sense instinctively when all the aspects of his/her individual characteristics are 'just right' for a particular task. Whether the result of an action in the world outside at that point of time wins credit or money or not, the heart says that 'this action is the right one'. At that moment, there is a feeling of contentment and fulfilment that is incomparable. Such an action is a spontaneous outpouring of the inner being. Behind this task of spontaneous creativity there lies a whole universe of *sadhana* or rigour, *shraddha* or attentiveness, *taala* or timing (order), *rasa* or enjoyment, and *anubhava* or experience.

The process of creation demands from its creator a depth of commitment and discipline. Even as the artist/designer fashions the work of art, the *rasa anubhava* within the artist is being evoked and when the artist offers his/her work of art to the outside world, the inner essence of the artist is mingled with the manifested object. It is this blending and mingling of personal energy, discipline and beauty that gives the user a sense of delight and fulfilment.

The traditional pot, or any other hand-crafted object has all these elements built into its very structure. The design, its ability to be handled with ease, the aesthetic joy it evokes, the simplicity of its maintenance are all qualities that form the core of the Indian tradition.

Shown on the following page are four objects integral to temple ceremonies. Each one has its own grammar of form and aesthetics.

Can this extraordinary synthesis of skill, feelings and beauty be communicated through a building? Yes, and it has living testimonials in the buildings of Chettinad, Jaisalmer, Udaipur, Tiruchi.

Even though the palace in figure 24 was built in several stages, the integrity and cohesiveness of the

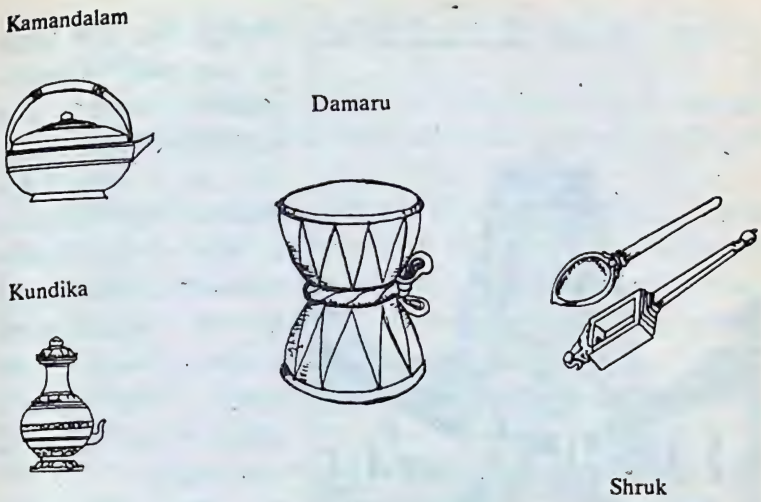



*Fig. 23. Typical temple items.*

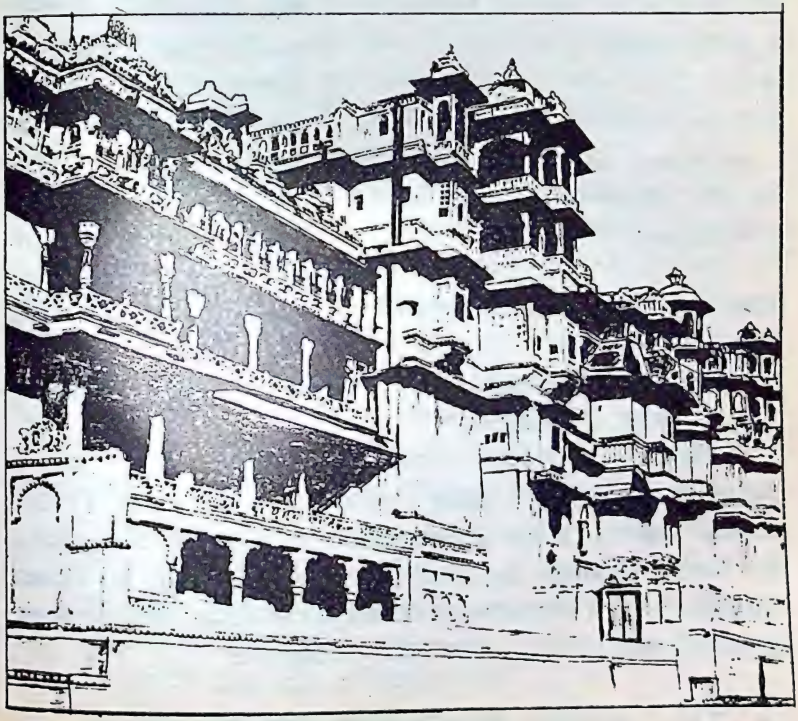


*Fig. 24. Elaborate façade of the city palace, Udaipur.*

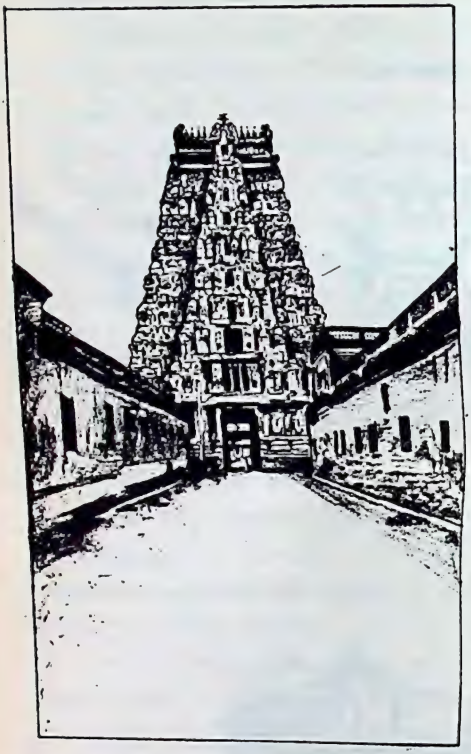


*Fig. 25. A view of a Gopuram in Srirangam.*

design has not been in any way compromised since the designers have adhered to a very tight rhythm and balance in the design. Every element in the façade is in synchronous rhythm with the other. The whole effect is like a poem unfolding.

The Srirangam temple with its soaring gopuram, and the austerity of the access path create an extraordinary effect on the devotee, of tranquillity and sublimation at the same time. Here the rhythm is employed like the soaring movement of a raga, endlessly reaching for perfection.

Where do I place my personal understanding in this scheme of things?

Being a vaastu consultant, as well as a designer/architect, I have come to understand a very critical aspect of my intervention in the life of a client. In their urgency to build something that is either essential or an investment or an acquisition, people have reached out to me. How do I respond?

- Do I promise them eternal peace?

- Do I say that the building will bring them endless wealth?
- Do I say this will be the epitome of their status?
- Do I refute all promises and offer them a machine?

Having pondered over all these possibilities, I have realized that I cannot do any of these. I can only define the boundaries of the built space, and help people locate the centre for themselves. The consequence of my action as a designer can never be a direct promise which offers all gifts. The experience of the space within and the impact of it on the occupant can only be under their control. If I were to overlay the space with my personality, then the potential of the occupant would be stifled. Therefore, as a designer I work with the quest of the occupants, and help them evolve a space which they can relate intimately to and which would help them achieve their aim. I do not promise them a life without sorrow or loss. The 'end of the day' experience would be of 'more-ness' or fulfilment in this space. That is my commitment.

To achieve this I stay with the constancy of my discipline or *sadhana*, my commitment to the honesty of the search or *shraddha*, the continuous rhythm of the order or *taala*, the deep savouring of the infinite within me and all around me or the *rasa*, and the offering of the experience which is both material comfort and spiritual well-being or *anubhava*.

In the tradition it is said that there are six ways to experience the flow of rhythm and order:

*In sound through music*
*In body through dance*
*In words through poetry*
*In space through architecture*
*In form through sculpture*

*In thought through mathematics*
*A person can experience the divine.*
From the oral verses of the Shilpi Shastra in Tamil.

## CLASSIFICATION OF DESIGN

To understand the application of traditional concepts in the field of design it is important to divide the design process into three parts, namely: new design, corrections to existing design, additions and restoration. The tradition has called the act of creation, healing and extension *Srishthi, Chikitsa* and *Vardhamana*. After having worked with the principles of yoga and healing practices I have reinterpreted these questions of Shrishti, Chikitsa and Vardhamana in the built form for contemporary application. I have named them Srishthi Vaastu, Chikitsa Vaastu and Vardhamana Vaastu.

### SRISHTHI VAASTU

While building something new on a vacant plot where the environmental energies live untapped and free, there is already an existing natural order and an apparent lifestyle in the neighbourhood (unless one is building on a vast natural tract where only the natural order of *prapancha* is apparent) which provide a context for the design. It is important that such energies be understood before a design can be evolved. Nowadays, in the contemporary neighbourhood, it has become common to build without any reference to either the already existing structures or the natural environment. Hence some buildings stand out like sore thumbs, blatantly alien. This may seem like 'fun', 'progressive', and 'innovative', but the impact of something so alien can have very disturbing results on the occupants of such a building.

One of the most important design briefs in the

traditions of vaastu is to be able to harmonize and blend with elements like the surrounding buildings, the terrain, directions, water table, soil fertility, breeze, rains, and the thermal patterns. Only a design which adapts to all these can even hope to satisfy the basic needs of the occupants. It is only after this is achieved that the other factors such as aesthetics and uniqueness come in.

> *Let us celebrate the One who is the energy of fire, the nourisher in water, who is life in all natural manifestation, who is growth in all plant life, who becomes blended in all reality.*
> Svetasvatara Upanishad (V.2.17)

The traditions of this country have drawn extensively from the primary experiences of the human consciousness. They have understood the universe as a system of varied elements existing in a symbiotic relationship with each other. Nature and human settlements balance each other in a mutually sustaining manner.

> *Let him meditate on the Supreme One—and from this he gets satisfaction in the rain, power in the lightning, fame in the cattle, light in the stars, offering of offspring, immortality and joy in procreation and as everything in Akasha.*
> Taitiriya Upanishad (Ch.3, Sec.10)

Yoga states that the individual's physical system, *praana*, and field of activity are intrinsically connected. Working with the *praana* and its subtle linkages to bodily manifestations of health is of great benefit to an individual. So also the intake of balanced food and

simple remedial herbs. A simplistic intervention through cures of symptoms cannot actually change the primary composition. Only by altering the inner configuration of *praana* and balance of the characteristics (*guna*) of the system through judicious application of herbs, exercise, meditation and change of lifestyle (habits) can the shift in consciousness and healing of negative energies take place.

> *Body is fixed in Praana, Praana fixed in body.*
> *Food is fixed in food.*
> *Water is food, fire is food eater, fire is fixed in water, water is fixed in fire.*
> *Food is fixed in food.*
> *Earth is food. Akasha is food eater, in earth is fixed Akasha, in Akasha is fixed earth. So food is fixed in food.*
> Taitiriya Upanishad (Ch.3, Sec.7)

Even while this change is being effected, there are so many other aspects of life itself which reach out and heal in almost miraculous ways. The relationship with loving people, contact with growing things like plants, children and animals, working with artistic skills, offering service to people and to the Divine spirit, are the ways open to each of us in the healing process. How does this happen?

The traditions speak of an actual process of change through which accumulated debris gets integrated and absorbed and negative energies become neutralized. Through bhakti, the energy of the Divine One enters the physical system and offers grace.

> *When a devotee offers to the Lord, a leaf a flower a fruit or water, the Lord accepts it.*

*When every action is made as an offering to the One, then shall the individual be liberated and attain integration with the Divine One.*
Bhagavad Gita 9th (Ch.9, V.26)

In a similar manner, a residence or any other kind of building is also seen as an extended organism connected both to the cosmic energies present in the environment and to the energy field of the occupants. Thus, the *praana* of the building is in consonance with the *praana* of the human inhabitants, the flora and fauna, and the cosmic energies already present in a given space at a given time.

Figure 26 shows a religious centre which has prayer halls, meditation halls and a sanctum built into the same structure. The main hall is a square with projections in the four directions, a circular altar in the centre, and

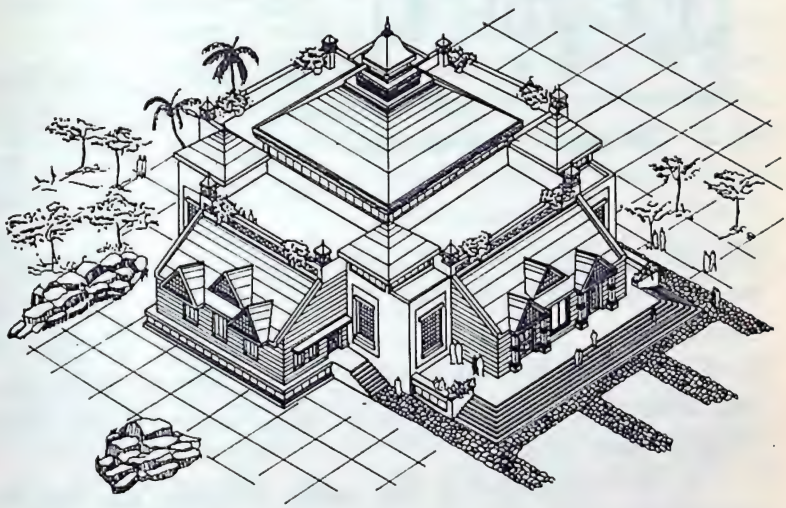


*Fig. 26. · Design of a religious centre by the author.*

*Fig. 27. An image of Lord Buddha.*

a series of pyramidal roofs rising up to the finial. All the elements are rhythmically connected to each other in proportion and form, and the experience of ascension in the mandala from level to level is reflective of the unfolding of the *meru* or *Sri Yantra* (details in Chapter 4). Bronze, tiles, wood, water bodies and flowering trees would be the overall theme for this religious centre.

CHIKITSA VAASTU

Whatever may be the nature of the work or lifestyle of an individual, there comes a time when an individual needs to reach out to someone and say 'Help me get my life in order, guide me into a state of tranquillity.' The listener need not be a trained professional of any kind, he/she need only be a deeply empathetic person, and there is a reaching out and healing takes place.

In the sculpture of the seated Buddha, the repose and stillness that is symbolized in the form is one of the most significant contributions of the tradition. This form when placed in any space lends serenity and grace

to the spot by its very presence.

The sanctum here is a typical example of the stillness that a space can achieve through simple geometric shapes and cavities. The diminishing outlines of the doorway add to the tranquillity of the lingam framed within it, which is set back in the shadows of the mysteriously lit sanctum behind.

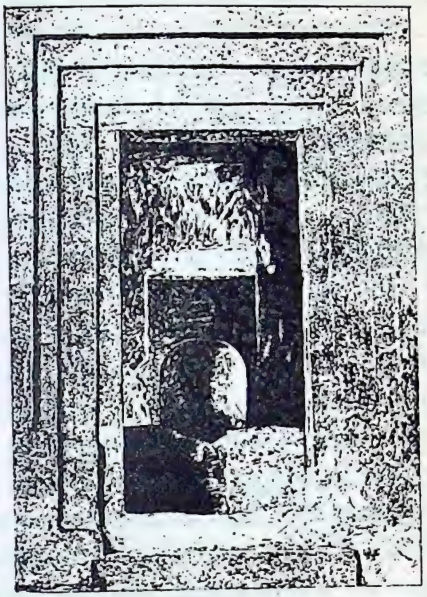


*Fig. 28. Entrance to sanctum, Elephanta.*

As a designer what is my role as a healer? Is there any connection at all between the two roles? Whatever type of building I design, I certainly do see the possibility of creating a space which enhances the quality of life of the occupants, extends their horizons and has the ability to 'soothe' their consciousness. This exchange that takes place is a necessary prerequisite for a designed building (element) to live beyond the lifetime of an individual occupant.

The energy transfer can only be a response to the disturbance in the psyche of the client, and can never replace the struggles and the sorrows of the person's life. The response can be in the nature of redefining the boundaries of their lives, but the inner energy, the awakening of the healing powers can only be done by the people themselves. The atmosphere for generating

such an enquiry and process can and must be created.

Whatever may be the pattern of the existing space and form within a building or object of art, it is important to bear in mind that the object and the space are already in existence. Whatever is added or introduced must essentially create new patterns within the existing system.

When there is a feeling of discomfort and dissatisfaction with an energy system, when individuals feel tired and reduced by the environment they occupy, then it is important to understand the existing energy lines, identify the nature of the relationships and energy drains before attempting any cures. Frequently, the negative spiral has to be lived through (perhaps even intensified) before a new pattern can be started. The 'price' that the individuals may have to pay is to accept the 'pain'; fighting it, magically wishing it away or taking refuge in self-pity and asking 'why me?' do not help. When this period of uncertainty has been accepted, then changes can take place. The symptoms of an illness in the individual body, or in the body of the family or organization are present in the physical fabric of its building or land. The field of energy of one will reflect in the other. Therefore, sickness felt in the building which makes one uncomfortable or uneasy, or a land that is decaying around a sick organization or family are only symptoms. The real illness is in the people. So by apparently correcting the building or the layout or the garden the real problem is being postponed. It is imperative that simultaneously the very nature of the collectives is analysed and healed. In fact in certain instances it may be possible to help the psyche of the occupiers in a positive manner which would remove the 'apparent' obstacles that are cluttering up the building.

Figure 29 shows a residence for a middle-class family. The oldest member, who was a woman, had

health problems and was keen to work with her disability without taking recourse to conventional medicine.

This design has offered the family a northern entrance (position of *soma* who is the Lord of herbs), with a *puja* turned inward at the *isaana* or NE corner (water quadrant) and facing the kitchen or nourishment centre in the quadrant SE (*agni*) to reduce the burning and the wastage (she had stomach and digestive problems). The bedrooms are placed in the SW (*pitru*) and NW (*vayu*) quadrants to help connecting her with her forefathers and with the purifying winds. The staircase which would take her into a higher level was located in the north which denotes healing and pleasure.

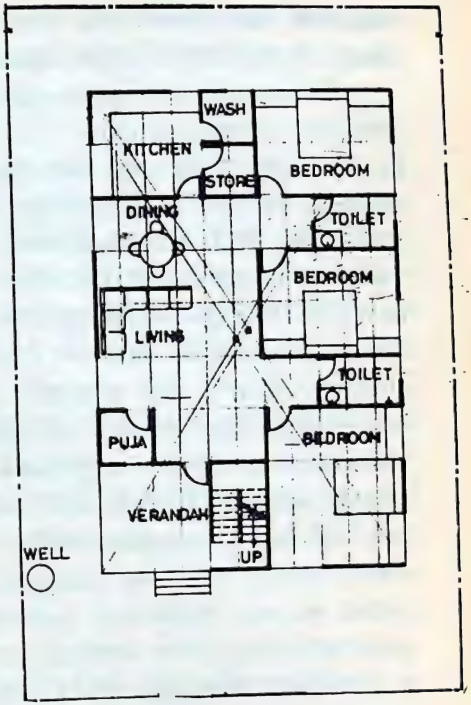



*Fig. 29. A north-facing house.*

Ailments which are obesity-based, insomnia and tension-related diseases can be affected in a positive manner by intervening with the ventilation and light within a house as well as in the diet and exercises of the family. Changing the waking and sleeping time patterns, correcting the night meal calories, following an exercise regimen, starting a small garden, opening more windows would go a long way in easing the problems. Actually shifting the kitchen may not be necessary at all.

Faulty lifestyles affect the building itself with

negative energies. This can automatically be reduced when the lifestyle is changed.

When a particular building is in need of correction because certain negative energies are palpable within it, then too, the existing patterns should be studied deeply before suggesting any remedies. Standard solutions, such as south-west highpoint and north-east water sources have become 'quick fix' solutions but have no real meaning unless the underlying problems are addressed. In one of the buildings I was asked to check, I found this precise 'quick fix' syndrome. The owner had carried out all the standard corrections as recommended by the popular books, checked all his 'vaastu expert' friends and advisors when he came to me. All the prerequisites for the correct vaastu house were there, such as location of water, kitchen, high point, master bedroom and so on, but the family was experiencing great turmoil and health problems. After a thorough investigation I learned that:

- There were three separate families living together in the house: two sons and their families and the parents with their unmarried children.
- The corrections that had been made had not taken care of the needs of the family as a whole and individually, therefore, every room ended up being like a passage or a hall with three or four doors opening out. None of the three families found any privacy; there was a collective feeling of being cooped up, and individual feelings of being lost.
- The subsequent additions to the house had completely destroyed both the integrity and discipline of the design as well as all light and breeze patterns. The house smelt stale and had pockets of dark musty areas in every room.
- Neither privacy nor collective living was

comfortable since none of the rooms was designed for separation or for gathering. There was no nexus to the house at all.

To be able to help in healing this home took up a lot of resourcefulness. The layout and functionality of the house had to be changed so that a new collectivity and privacy could emerge. Windows and ventilators had to be added to bring in light and air. Aesthetics had to be introduced so that the family would not suffer 'spiritual atrophy'.

There is an element of creativity and healing in this process of *chikitsa* as well as an element of blending with an existing system. Hence Srishthi, Chikitsa and Vardhamana go hand in hand.

## VARDHAMANA VAASTU

What I call Vardhamana Vaastu includes adding to existing buildings, change of use with minimal alterations, restoration of historical buildings and extensions and enhancement of facilities. All these actions include an understanding of the existing building system, a sensitivity to the energies that have already been confined and invested in, an awareness of form, colour, space and aesthetics which are inherent to the design, an understanding of the lifestyle and relationships of the past occupants of the building.

In every dimension of the existing building along X, Y, Z axis the additions should be rhythmically added to the core. This is a fundamental principle of vaastu. The module must be evolved, and all additions should be in multiples or fractions of this. Only then can the entire structure possess a coherence which affects the occupants in a positive manner. The methodology adopted is not different from the steps set out in the

Srishthi Vaastu methodology. These principles may be taken as the basic for all design of and additions to buildings based on the traditions of vaastu. In Chapter 5, the methodology of design set out is applicable to all three—Srishthi, Chikitsa or Vardhamana aspects of design.

Figure 30 shows an old building to which additions have been made, the open quadrangle has been left undisturbed so that the health of the building is not affected in an adverse manner.

Provided the designer can grasp the balance between various elements of a structure, it is possible to add to any building without affecting its health. The organization of form and space plays an important role in this.

What do we really demand from a building? Let us take a sample house for analysis:

- We need spaces to carry out our everyday actions such as sleeping, reading, cooking, bath and toilet facilities, interactive spaces, spaces to be alone in

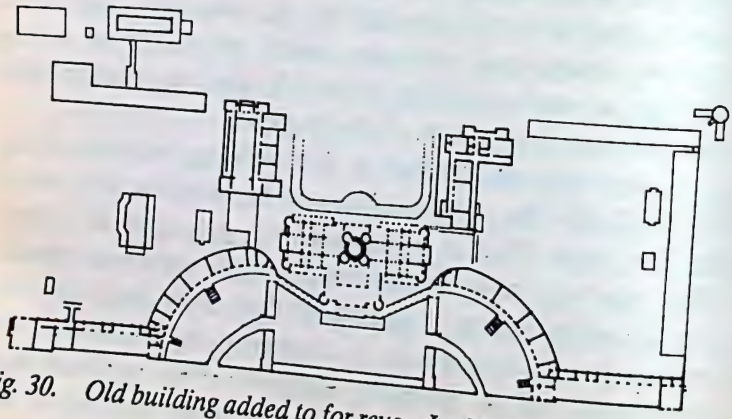


*Fig. 30. Old building added to for reuse, La Martiniere, Lucknow.*

and of course, a space for entertaining visitors and guests.

- Ample storage room for all equipment for our physical comforts and whatever is within our buying power. Parking space for cars and scooters and cycles.
- As far as possible, within the space constraints we would also like to have a small garden, or a couple of potted plants as well as some access to open space where the adults may relax and children may play (and if pets are part of the family they too must have some space).

When all these above conditions are satisfied, do we say the house is a good one? Some may, but by and large most of us also require something else.

'We need to feel comfortable and relaxed in this space,' say some people.

'We must have a unique house that creates awe in the observer,' say others.

'Our house must reflect in a subtle way the very heart and soul of our family'; and so on.

Can a carefully executed design have all the prerequisites as well as meet these abstract needs of people? Vaastu says, 'Yes, if the basic principles are followed and if the designer is sensitive to the blending of the visible and the invisible, the here and now and the timeless energies.'

Let us take a look at this in greater detail in the subsequent chapters.

# 4

# Philosophies and Practices of Vaastu

In the Indian tradition, through the ages, certain beliefs and philosophies have been nurtured and kept alive. The most significant aspect of Indian philosophy has been its integration into the lifestyle of the people. It can even be said that the philosophies were evolved out of a holistic lifestyle. Religion and the practice of theology are only one aspect of the belief system. By and large, the grandest and most complex philosophical systems have their origins in the simple, mundane applications of ordinary people in their daily life. As a result, even in an ordinary situation, the traditional belief is capable of offering the individual the benefits of extraordinary joy and sublimation simultaneously. To understand the field of vaastu it is also important to understand the nature of the universe as expressed by the Indian tradition.

The dominant religious practice known as Hinduism was originally known as *Sanatana Dharma* which became popularized under the 'Hindu' banner after the coming of the Jesuits. Whatever may be the nature of religious practice, whichever God is chosen for worship, the nature of the religion, its theology, its worship methodology, and the belief system which ties individuals with each other can be brought under a common framework. This framework, in the words of Swami Vivekanananda, is the worldview of Vedanta.

Although the philosophical concepts are unlimited,

I have chosen nine of them for elaboration in this context since these philosophies have very close connections with the wisdom of vaastu.

## PHILOSOPHIES OF VEDANTA AND VAASTU

- Paramatman/Jivatman, Prakara Beejam
- Shivam/Shakti
- Panchabhoota, Cosmology in Vaastu
- Triguna
- Dvaitam/Advaitam
- Karma Bandhanam
- Purusha/Prakriti, Vaastu Purusha Mandala

### PARAMATMAN/JIVATMAN

Where does the individual fit in the larger scheme of things? In what way do the individual elements fit into a composite whole? In the Indian tradition, in all aspects of everyday life, one of the most powerful philosophies that has been in existence is that of *paramatman/jivatman*.

Every individual *atman*, or spiritual centre, is in alignment with the collective or larger order. In ordinary moments the energies at play do not raise the individual elements into any greater plane of consciousness. But there are magical moments, when the collective consciousness and the larger energy becomes palpable to the individual's understanding due to a certain configuration or mandalam. This 'threshold into the other' happens naturally in rare moments—when the subtle *atman* of certain evolved souls touches the Divine and sublimates itself. But what of the ordinary individual? Is this extraordinary experience available to each of us?

Yes, says the Indian tradition. It is possible to

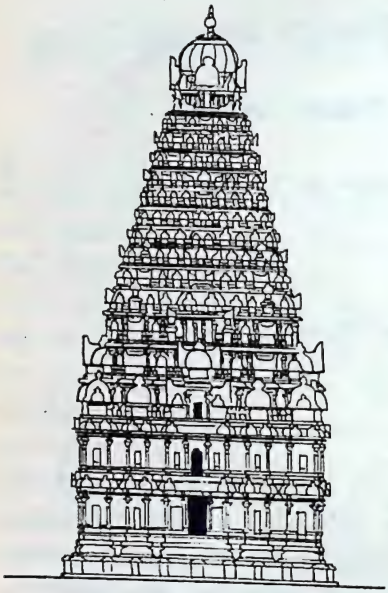


*Fig. 31. Brihadeeswara temple.*

actually create such a vibration through judicious application of rhythms and proportions so that the occupants of the specific space may be jolted into experiencing the utter stillness of the energy centre. Music, dance, visual arts, architecture have been vehicles for this experience to be offered to the individual.

It is stated that architecture which consists of forms, space, proportion, energy points and aesthetic features (the individual building, a group of buildings, the landscape and all such elements) can be put together in such a way that the entire experience created by the building would bring about an extraordinary response in the occupants. This enhancement and enrichment of the users' consciousness becomes the responsibility of the designer.

> *Within the body, the atman resides as a luminous energy. The nature of this atman can be apprehended by those who live a life of Truth.*
>
> Mundakopanishad (Ch.3, V.5)

The sketch of the Brihadeeswara temple in Tanjavur shows the intricate detailing of the reducing ascent of

the temple tower. The tradition has given great value to this rhythmic visual impact, and this temple is considered to be among the most awesome structures.

In the Trimurti sculpture, the contradiction between the repose and meditativeness of the eyes, and the sensuousness and beauty of the mouth are a product of artistic creativity, mathematical rigour of design and mastery over the material.

*Fig. 32. The Trimurti, Elephanta.*

For this eternal quest of man to be evoked and brought alive, the manifested form of the individual abode known as *manushyalaya*, and the sacred abode for the Divine One known as *devalaya*, are invested with the sacred proportions and meditative elements. Every individual *atman* is offered both spaces for the inward and outward seeking for peace, contentment and well-being.

*Who is He whom we meditate upon as atman? That indeed is the jivatman by which a living being sees, hears, smells, speaks, tastes, touches, experiences, thinks, meditates. All things on*

*this earth are guided by Brahman or paramatman, all that moves and stays, all that grows, all that is large and that is small. He who has realized the atman obtains all delights in this world. Indeed he gains immortality.*
Aitareyopanishad (Ch.3, Sec.1)

The first principle of vaastu which emerges from this connectedness of individual spirit and the cosmic spirit is as follows:

The physical abode is the resting place for the body, psyche, spirit of the individual and the smaller unit of a family or group. This is the space wherein the *jivatman* of the individual and consciousness of the group can achieve spiritual harmony and contentment during their sojourn in earthly life.

*Manushyalaya* is the space for discovering and honing the individual spirit or *jivatman*. Simultaneously, the *devalaya* or the sacred abode is the space where the *jivatma* may strive to attain harmony and balance with the *paramatman* or cosmic spirit. This *devalaya* can be a physical structure, a sacred place or sacred waters, where the physical environment emanates a positive energy capable of transforming the individual and the collective consciousness. Such a space is also called *siddham* (sacred, divine space). Some locations or sites are sacred in their very character. In such places, the building also imbibes power which can bestow *siddhi* or spiritual powers to the occupants.

There are many stories in existence about the founding of an empire based on the energy pulls of a space. Ujjain was founded when the land with its powerful energies called the spirit of King Vikaramaditya and motivated him to establish his capital near the Kali temple. Similarly Vijayanagar was founded when the king noticed the great changes the land made on a rabbit

which became courageous and defied its predator. In this place the empire was established.

> *The paramatman exists as the luminous substance within the individual body. He is the largest and the smallest, most heavy and the most subtle, He is so far away and yet within us, residing in the cavern of our heart.*
> Mundakopanishad (Ch.3, V.7)

These physical manifestations of the spiritual energies of *paramatman* can be experienced by some unique people who have been at the helm of human destiny and continue to guide the spiritual movement of a people.

*Prakara Beejam or the Bindu.* When the inward movement of the Divine experience or *swanubhavam* takes place, the attention and energy of the individual moves from its multiple outward locations towards the centre or *bindu* of the consciousness. This concentration of all energy is the quest of the yogi to attain control over the spiritual field. When this attention is achieved, it is possible to attain *siddhi* or great powers over the material system. In the ordinary space within the being of ordinary mortals such a conscious inward movement may not be possible, but when the individual stumbles upon those rare moments of extraordinary clarity and attention, the *bindu* is touched fleetingly which causes the experiencer to lose touch with his physical system not unlike a sexual release. (The sexual release is called the smaller joy, while the spiritual coming together into a power-packed centre is called the larger joy or *brahmananda*). When music, poetry, beauty, sculpture and painting, dance, harikatha are seen or heard with great attention, it is said that the *bhakta* or devotee

attains the great joy or becomes one with the *bindu* within himself/herself.

> *The prasada or sacred precint which houses the Divine One is itself the form of the Purusha and therefore suitable for worship.*
> Shilparatna (Ch.16, V.114)

> *The human body itself is like a temple within which resides the jivatman. The mouth is the entrance to this temple. For those who have understood, the atman is the linga which the five senses are endlessly illuminating. I celebrate this body! I celebrate this spirit!*
> Tirumandiram (140.1.)

This *bindu* is called *prakara beejam* in the field of vaastu. Within every built form, in the centre of a community or village, there exists a centre or *beejam* (seed) which is the psychical and spiritual centre of the form. Into this centre all the energies of the entire form condense, and from it the form is created. It is also called the *brahmasthana*. This central point within the precinct must be nurtured and protected so that every occupant, every *bhakta* will be deeply moved when he/she enters this space. Out of this evocation the stillness of the individual centre can be touched and briefly (or continuously if the person is evolved spiritually) the individual stays with the primary experience. Such a design which allows for this experience to take place is indeed a blessed one.

The temple building is seen as the *purusha* in form, with the entrance as his feet, the *mandapa* or hall as his body and the *garbhagriha* as his head. Similarly the vertical structure is also seen as his body with the dome at the top *(shikharam)* representing his

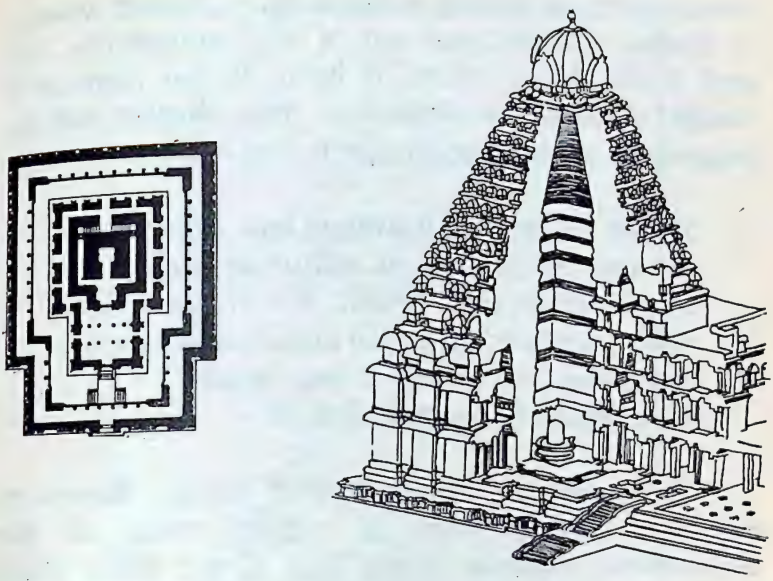


*Fig. 33 Temple layout and a sectional view of the Brihadeeswara temple, Tanjavur.*

head. The image within the sanctum is the subtle energy of *brahman* and *vimaana* the physical body.

In this way, the structure of the temple or the sacred body is itself perceived as the universe of spiritual and physical sublimation for every individual *atman* as well as the human collective energies.

## SHIVAM/SHAKTI

The progression through which the ultimate cosmic seed or *vishwa beejam* manifests itself into the world of reality is spoken of, in the tradition of Vedanta, as the transformation of energy into gross material substance (*sookshma* to *sthoola*).

In the silence of cosmic space there exists the twilight zone of the infinite consciousness. This

consciousness or *shivam* is suspended in *Satchit Ananda*, or blissful stillness, and out of this stillness the first seed of the desire 'to be' is born. At that moment of change, timelessness shifts into time (*kaala*) and the progression of metamorphosis is begun.

> *Shivam or Ishwara is without end, infinite and formless. He is without colour or quality. In combination with Shakti He creates form, colour and variety. In the end He also destroys everything and brings it into himself.*
> Svetasvatara Upanishad (V.3.12)

The movement of the coiled energy, known as *kundalini shakti*, from its resting place in the *mooladhara chakram* at the base of the spinal chord to the *sahasrara chakram* at the top of the head is seen as the fusing of *shakti* with *shivam*.

> *The nectar which overflows from the head when Shakti meets Shivam is like a joyous, outpouring of the being in the throes of ecstasy.*
> Devi Panchastavi (Ch.4, V.6)

This movement from stillness and bliss into manifestation is the secret of creation. The still centre is known as *shivam*, and the energy which is the energy of creation is *shakti*, the former the male principle and the latter the female. In the Indian tradition the male/female is inextricably linked as the *ardhanareeshwara* (half male and half female) and the *srivatsam* (the mole) on the body of Vishnu. (The feminine principle exists in the form of a mole on the body of the male).

In every design, be it a residence, religious or secular building, the stillness of *shivam* and the

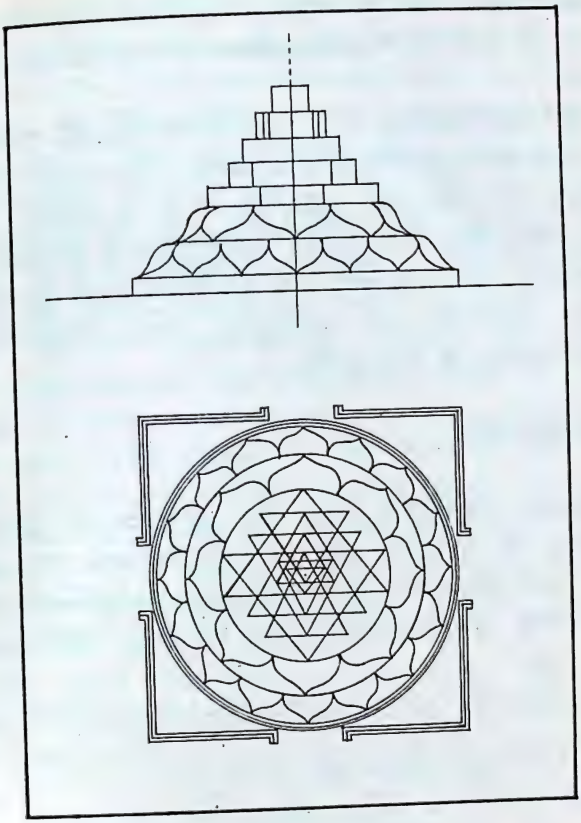


*Fig. 34 Sri Yantra design in plan, Mahameru in three-dimensions.*

exuberance and manifesting energy of *shakti* have to be equally present. The stillness is the *brahmasthana* and the manner by which the activities, the spaces and forms move away from the centre are all activities of the energy field or *shakti*. The land or *bhoomi* with its vibrant stillness anchored in the soil is *shivam*, and the building is a manifestation of *shakti* as it grows out organically from the earth and explodes into a form. Every occupant experiences both the stillness and the movement, provided the design allows for the two to coexist without impediment. This is the secret of the

*brahmasthana*, the *padam* (concentric spaces around the centre) and the *marmasthana* of the building (energy points).

The *Sri Yantra* is a two dimensional mandala in which *shivam* and *shakti* are united through a series of triangles, circles and squares. It is a mystic diagram used in worship. The three dimensional version of this is known as *mahaameru*. The arithmetic calculation used in this mandala is complex and requires deep understanding of the texts.

PANCHABHOOTA

As *shivam* manifests into the glories of *prapancha* (universe of forms), the energy moves through the elements of ether, air, fire, water and earth. Each element has its own characteristics and its own nature.

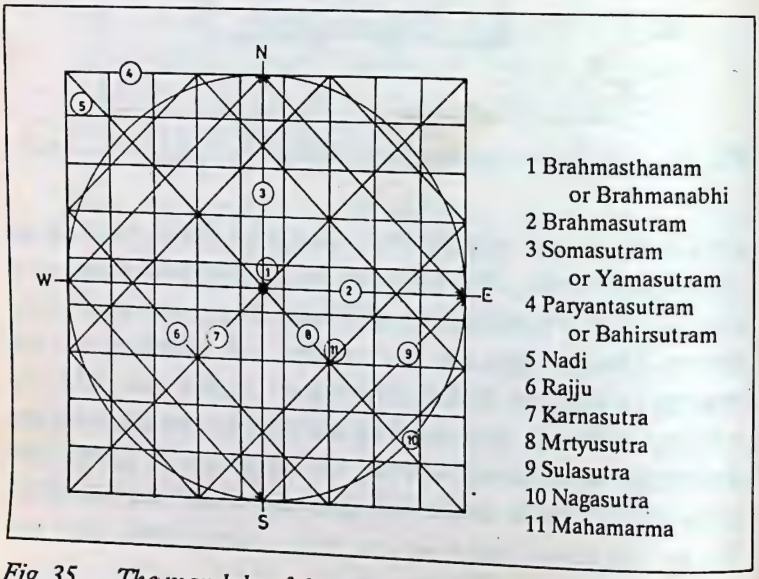



*Fig. 35. The mandala of the land with all the marmasthana (or vital points) marked.*

*The atman created the gods, the guardians of the universe. And they were subjected to hunger and thirst and needed a body to reside in. So, He, the atman created a human being for them, and said 'Do enter the body according to your place'. Then fire having turned to speech entered the mouth. Air having become scent entered the nostrils. Sun having become sight entered the eyes. The deities of the quarters (directions) having become hearing, entered the ears. The deities of the plants and trees having become hairs, entered the skin. The moon having become mind, entered the heart. The God of death having become the out-breath entered the navel. The Gods of the waters, having become seed, entered the generative organ. Hunger and thirst said to Him 'Assign a place for us.' He made them partners with the deities of the senses. Therefore, to whichever God an offering is made, hunger and thirst become partners in it.*

Aitareyapanishad (Ch.1, Sec.2)

In an act of creation, the manifested objects become subservient to the cosmic order of *panchabhoota*. They too are answerable to the nature and characteristics of the *bhoota* in the ensuing design. In other words, the five elements play a subtle part in the emanated form and each has its location and role, meaning and power.

In the vaastu or site, earth is the centre, water is in the north-east, fire in the south-east, ether or space in the south-west, air in the north-west. In the centre where earth is at its most powerful, the *brahmasthana* is operating in its most intense state. Such an energy of the earth which is the source of human sustenance

should be celebrated by praising and celebrating the bounty of the earth. It is here that a ritual known as *garbhanyasa* is carried out. Several other locations are also recommended for *garbhanyasa* when the centre cannot be dug up or consecrated for various reasons. (Details under Rituals).

The four corners of fire, water, air and space are then marked as the limit of the site (*Bhoomi Vaastu*) and this can be done with natural materials such as stone, brick or wooden pillars, or with medicinal plants such as tulasi, neem, or with fragrant flowering bushes and trees whose flowers are used for worship in temples, such as *parijaata*, *nandyavarta*, *viruvakshi*, *champaka*, hibiscus, etc. In the north-west corner, bamboo can also be grown. In the north-east corner, a water body with lilies and lotus can also be placed.

By defining the five elements the land is taken back into its primary energy levels and restored to its natural state.

Prior to the starting of the building activity the first stones are placed in the north-east corner which is an important ritual, along with the *bhoomi puja* or ritual to consecrate the earth and begin the activity of building. Even as we decide to occupy the specific locations for our personal needs, we speak to the energies and seek their permission for our task, and their co-operation in our activities. This is the blessing and grace of the energies for our well-being and mutual dependence.

*I call the deities, and offer salutations to them. Praise be to the mantra. Praise be to the Lord of the nine gems. Salutations to the creator Brahma who is the originator of Truth. Salutations to Sri the originator of all wealth. Praise and salutations to Sarasvati the originator of knowledge. Salutations to Vivasvata, salutations to Vajrapani. Salutations*

*to the young remover of obstacles Vignesha,*
*Glory to Vahni.*
Mayamatam (Ch.12, V.98)

Finally when the building is completed four bricks are placed on the top under the finial or *stoopi*.

For this also the energies of the land are invoked and propitiated. The lord of earth, heavens, the waters and creation are called one by one and thanked and satisfied. Only after this action can the building be completed. Hence at the outset and at the end the elements and the lords of the environment are constantly remembered.

*Cosmology in Vaastu*. Every traditional culture has related to the physical environment in terms of states of consciousness of the cosmic spirit, and has built legends and myths around the gods and goddesses. There are half-human nymphs and *devas*, part animal or bird deities that are winged marvels or extraordinary composite creatures. Psychologists have attempted to explain these strange creations of human kind through the ages as expressions of human fantasy and desire.

In the Indian traditions, cosmology has always played a significant role in the growth of art forms and the manifestation of forms in space.

It is said that the form of the cosmos is recreated on earth for human beings to inhabit. Each direction has its own identity based on the presiding *deva*, its symbol, colour and element. From a division of physical space in a site into its cosmological pattern, a subtle or abstract form is obtained. This in turn affects the physical form of the building. The directions that a building may face, the energies that will enter and enrich the inner spaces, and the connection between the building and its environment are all part of the cosmology of the place.

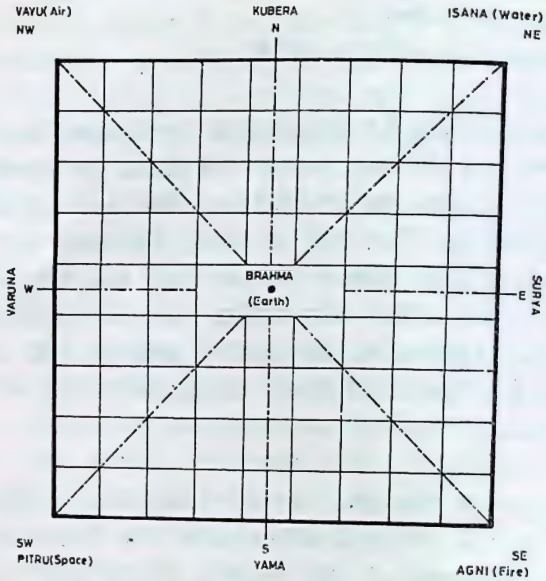



*Fig. 36. Cosmology in vaastu .*

Following are the directions with their corresponding energies outlined by vaastu:

*Isaana* (north-east): The lord of water, passionate, uncontrolled, deeply compassionate when happy. It is the direction of nourishing energies.

*Aditya* (east): Warm, glowing, luminous, beneficial, adding to growth, destructive when crossed. It is the direction of life energy.

*Agni* (south-east): Burning, luminous, capable of both disintegration and healing. It is the direction of spiritual growth.

*Yama* (south): Destroyer, establisher of dharma or rules of conduct, fast and intrepid, compassionate when pleased. This is the direction of the meaning of life and death.

*Pitru* (south-west): The lord of ancestors, holder of the future patterns of man, the repository of wisdom, over-structured and frozen, incapable of change.
*Varuna* (west): Lord of water, creator, adventurous, bold, destructive, heralder of change. This is the direction of the unknown.
*Vayu* (north-west): Lord of winds, fast, destructive, benevolent, creator of mental patterns. It is the direction of intellectual achievements.
*Soma/Kubera* (north): Holder of wealth and medicine, source of indulgence and luxury. It is the direction of healing.
*Brahma* (centre): The anchor of stillness and repose, and the nexus for the entire cosmic movement.

Every aspect of each of the directions must be understood by the designer as well as the occupant so that the built form blends with the natural environment.

Surprisingly, all the great civilizations have interpreted the cosmology of space in fairly similar ways. The south is considered to be the direction of the Lord of Death as well as spiritual rebirth in Greek legends also.

## TRIGUNA

Each physical form is perceived as a composition of three *gunas* or characteristics known as *satvika, rajasa, tamasa*. When one of these *gunas* is predominant then the nature of the material object takes on the dominant character.

This balance between the dominant and hidden potential is a very significant aspect of Vedanta and yoga. The effort of every individual is to balance the three natures in such a way as to be functional and well-knit and capable of acting sensitively in a particular

context. *Rajasa* being powerful is positive, but when the system demands a great deal of aggression to get something done *tamasa* is required. When the context needs to be understood with tranquillity then *satvika* must be predominant. Hence all the *gunas* have their relevance and their inherent strengths.

*Satvika* is the luminous, meditative quality. The pure intelligence of the consciousness is illumined.
*Rajasa* is the vibrant, energetic, active element. The speed and movement of the inner urge to achieve.
*Tamasa* is the inertia, the aggression, the tenacity to hold back and gather together the weight of the self for action outside.

In yoga the three states of the *gunas* are described as the movement of the *atman* itself towards attaining the supreme goal. First comes *tamasa* or the will to live, to grasp and to consume, next comes *rajasa*, the energy to act and to achieve and finally *satvika*, the desire to draw inward and stay in stillness and in luminosity.

In vaastu, the three *gunas* are characterized by the three shapes of circle, octagon and square.

- Circle (elongated circle or ellipse) *tamasa*
- Octagon (elongated octagon, pentagon polygon) *rajasa*
- Square (rectangle) *satvika*

The energy contained within the square and rectangle is the most stable, restful and in equilibrium. This is considered suitable for residences and places of learning.

The energy contained in a polygon is in movement and greater than that within a square. It is suitable for

centres of energetic activities such as offices.

The energy contained in the circle is very high and considered aggressive. It stimulates the occupant to a high degree (or the opposite and creates inertia or immobility). This is suitable for stadia, entertainment centres, amphitheatres, council chambers, and sometimes for religious centres such as prayer halls and temples.

## DVAITAM/ADVAITAM

To reach the ultimate state of dissolution, to achieve the sublimation of the *jivatman* with *paramatman*, two paths have been recommended, one known as *dvaitam* and the other *advaitam*.

In *dvaitam* (which means two or duality, the 'I' and the 'Him'/'Her') the assumption is that *paramatman* inhabits the outer space and therefore *jivatman* has to lose itself in the outer consciousness. The method chosen for this dissolution of individual consciousness in the larger Divine consciousness is through bhakti or devotion. The Lord is perceived in His/Her physical manifestation and to this form individual devotion is offered in prayer, chanting, meditation, music and dance. This complete surrender at the feet of the Lord leads to the dissolution and synthesis of the individual identity into the larger cosmic being.

For this path to work effectively, the temple or the sacred precinct, and the Divine image or *pratima* become very important. The whole context of a temple and that of ritual are part of this rediscovery of the Divine Nature in the sacred or holy place, and the sublimation of the individual into a higher plane of consciousness.

In this *shloka*, the lord (*paramatman*) calls the devotee to surrender his total consciousness into his safe-keeping so that the individual may be guided from

the world of sorrow into liberation.

> *The Lord said, 'He who is compassionate, hates no creature, who has no egoism, is self-controlled, possessed of deep conviction, whose thought and reason are directed to me, he is dear to me. Fix thy mind and reason to me exclusively. Thou shall live within me hereafter. For those who worship me, renouncing all action into me, who are fixed in me, I become the deliverer from this universe of phenomena.*
> Bhagavad Gita (Ch.12, V.6,7,13,14)

*Advaitam* means without duality (there is only one, I and He are one).

> *He who sees the Supreme Lord remaining the same in all beings, the undying in the dying, when he realizes the whole variety of creation as resting in the One, he then becomes Brahman.*
> Bhagavad Gita (Ch.13, V.30)

> *I have neither bondage nor freedom. The illusion of life having lost its support, has come to an end. The universe though it abides in me does not in fact exist in me. Oh marvellous! I do not find any duality even in the midst of crowds. I feel as though I am in a forest. I am not the body, not the being. I am pure consciousness.*
> Ashtavakra Gita (Ch.2, V.18,21,22)

This philosophy accepts the same *bhakti marga* (path of devotion) also but further simplifies it by saying

that this Divine or cosmic being is not outside of the individual consciousness, but actually within the self. Hence, in attaining perfect harmony with the *jivatman*, the individual consciousness has actually integrated with the *paramatman*. Through meditation, worship, music and chanting, this path too leads the individual into a state of peace and quiet, liberating the desires and establishing the individual in the sacred space of the larger Divine intelligence. In that moment of synthesis, two identities do not exist, only one, the infinite being or *paramatman*.

In the field of architecture the philosophies of Dvaitam and Advaitam have had great impact particularly in the realm of religious buildings. All temple precincts are built around the concept of form and space which articulate the search for the Divine either within the self or outside of the self and the reaching of the goal which denotes salvation from the ocean of human sorrow.

The image in the *garbhagriha* or sanctum is that of the presiding deity. When in complete faith, the devotee goes to this deity and surrenders at His/Her feet, the devotee is gathered into Divine space and ultimately integrated into the infinite grace of the Divine being. Every prayer, every chant, every act of cleansing with holy water leads one nearer and nearer to this ultimate goal of total integration with the Supreme One.

The image in the *garbhagriha* is an indication of the Divine that is all pervasive and anchored within each of us. The Divine spirit awakens the individual to the divine roots within. He/She helps the devotee to journey into the self, cross the ocean of sorrow so that his limited self, which is a prisoner of time, will expand until all reality becomes part of it. It is then that the individual becomes the larger consciousness, touches the Divine One within and merges with Him/Her.

This quotation talks of the journey into the body, which is a mirror of the movement of the individual into the temple, and reaching the *garbha* or the womb of the *paramatman*.

> *In this very body, in the mind full of intelligence and light, in the secret chamber of the intellect, in the space known as the atman, which is splendid, shining like the sun, manifesting the universe through its own luminosity.* Vivekachoodamani (V.132)

In a residence too, or in an institution of learning, or a place of work, it is possible for individuals to be guided by the environment to offer the self into the larger collective. Sometimes it is quite possible for the individual reality to expand and absorb the divine universe. A built space can offer these journeys inward and outward to the occupant. A Dvaitam evocation would be more relevant for building a collective identity and the Advaitam evocation better for a place of learning, research institute or training centre where individual excellence would be of high value. An Advaita experience built into the space may perhaps inspire and evoke the individuals to go into themselves and gather their energies together.

In the temple tradition, there is one ritual that a devotee goes through which exemplifies the entire movement of the quest and the merging. Each devotee walks slowly around the sacred precinct in a clockwise movement (*pradakshina*), comes to the *garbhagriha* (sanctum), stands in front of the deity and revolves around his or her own axis in a clockwise direction (*Atmapradakshina*). The devotee seeks all around in the universe of reality, comes face to face with the universal spirit, has a momentary awareness of the power and intensity of the quest, and goes into the self to discover

the divine spark within.

KARMA BANDHANAM

*Karma bandhanam* is the confinement of each individual *atman* to repeated births as a consequence of action accrued in each birth. Swami Vivekananda says:

> *Karman is the most tremendous power that a person has to deal with. Every individual is a centre attracting the powers of the universe towards himself or herself. Out of the whole stream of energy running into the person, he or she is fashioning their character. The power to throw out is as great as the power to take in. The character is a result of Karman. Such a gigantic will as that of a Buddha or a Jesus could not be obtained in one life . . . No one can get anything unless he earns it. Our Karman determines what we deserve and what we can assimilate.*

Every individual spirit has its own defined path to journey through in its gradual ascension towards total absorption with the Divine One. At each stage in its evolution, the spirit has a certain part of the whole mystery of life revealed to it and this revelation forms the basis for the new quest and the new reaching in each lifetime. All the actions that have been made by the individual are accrued to the spirit *(atman)* and this debit/credit goes on. How can this burden of the past come to an end? In yoga, it is stated that in each lifetime there are ways in which this endless addition can be ended, through complete, total enlightenment.

How does this enlightenment take place? In the

words of Swami Vivekananda:

> *First destroy the tendency for selfishness. Then you may go out into the world and work, without fear of being contaminated with evil.*

- Through bhakti to the Divine One and an offering of all action at the feet of the Lord (*Bhakti*).
- By freeing oneself of all props and support systems and staying with the unswerving devotion to truth *(Satya)*.
- By immersing the whole being into a choice of action *(karman)*—work for the good of others.
- By pouring all the passion and love within the individual into an artistic endeavour *(kalaa)* and offering beauty to the self, to the Lord and to others.

In any of these paths, the fusion of the individual identity to a larger intelligence or context is identical. Each person chooses the one closest to their heart and to their nature.

The process of refining the spirit in this voyage of life is filled with uncertainties, fears, delusions, seductions and failures. At no point is there a guarantee that the individual will find eternal peace or complete freedom from sorrow and pain. Cessation of movement of any kind whether painful or otherwise is akin to death and therefore unreal. The very desire for a trouble-free existence itself is a delusion or *avidya* and must be cleaved through so that the spirit can accept and live through the travails, the highs and the lows with equanimity and grace. Sogyal Rinpoche quotes the words of Buddha and Padmasambhava to explain their wisdom of the nature of the universe:

*What you are is what you have been, what you will be is what you do now.*

*If you want to know your past life, look into your present condition. If you want to know your future life, look at your present actions.*

PURUSHA/PRAKRITI

As discussed earlier, the primary energy of *shivam* transformed by *shakti* into a manifestation of the abstract elements is the *panchabhoota*, and these cosmic elements become anchored into the earth. It is at this point that we become conscious of these elemental energies becoming part of the living universe. The manifestation of energy into the universe of reality or *prapancha* is the movement of *purusha/prakriti (shivam/shakti)*. The cosmic being or *purusha* becomes the visible world of reality and in so doing replicates the cosmic order on the earth. It becomes the *Vaastu Purusha* or the earth-being.

*Vaastu Purusha Mandala*. Vaastu Purusha is the body on which every aspect of human activity is carried out. Whether we build a house, a factory, school, well, compound-wall, tank or playground, we are placing it upon the sacred body of the cosmic being who has come to reside with us. Every part of his body is sacred, with energies and characteristics that add to and enhance our life on earth. Therefore, it is to him we bow in gratitude when we start upon any endeavour, and to him we offer our thanks through flowers and incense, minerals and metals, herbs and colours, amidst music and chanting.

The story of the Vaastu Purusha goes thus: In the ages gone by, there lived a demon called Vaastu who

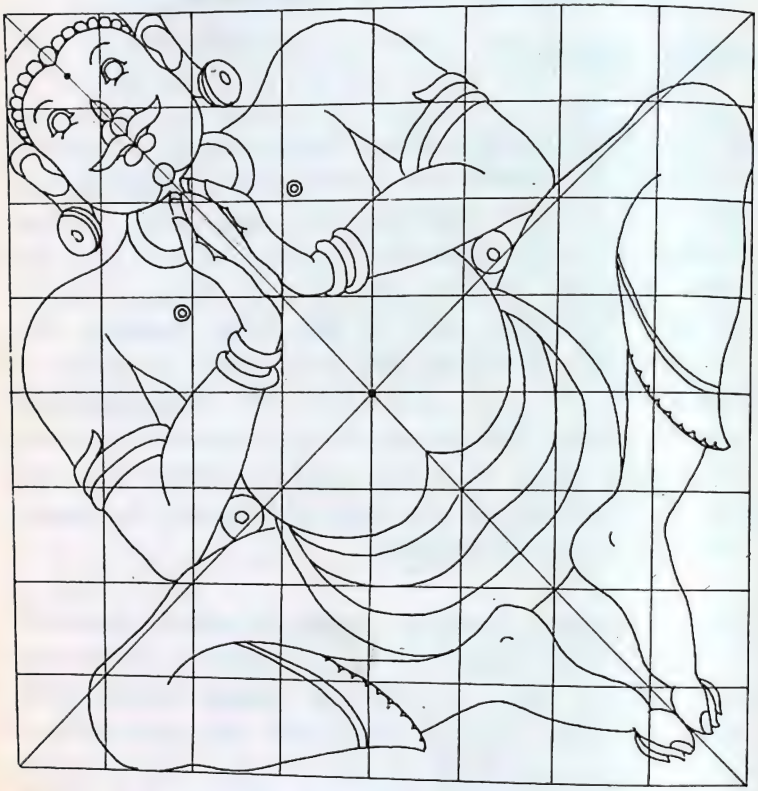


*Fig. 37. Vaastu Purusha Mandala or energy grid with the energy body of the earth.*

was fierce and powerful and in the habit of terrorizing the world. As the situation became unbearable the gods came together to fight him. Yet, his powers were such that his essence continued to permeate the land causing untold misery to the humans and gods alike. In response, the gods went to Lord Brahma for help.

Affected by the grief of the gods, Lord Brahma fought and pinned the demon firmly to the ground, and as a further precaution ordered a certain number of gods to sit on him and stop his activities. The popular belief is that the Vaastu Purusha lies face-down on the ground, though a few texts claim he lies face up.

Though it is a myth it can be interpreted to mean that the energy comes from cosmic space and manifests itself as the contained energy within material phenomena. The cosmic energy manifests itself as a phenomenon after moving through a series of transformation—ether, fire, water and earth. Hence the built space is created according to the impulses of the earth, in consonance with the waking and slumber of the earthly energy.

*From space appeared air,*
*From air appeared fire,*
*From fire appeared water,*
*From water appeared earth,*
*From earth appeared the herbs,*
*From herbs appeared food,*
*From food appeared human beings*
*Therefore the human being is pervaded by food.*
Taitiriya Upanishad (Ch.2, Sec.1)

Vaastu or *bhoomi* is vibrating and alive. This is the space of the earth or land. This energy resides in the earth and is called by various names such as *vaastu*

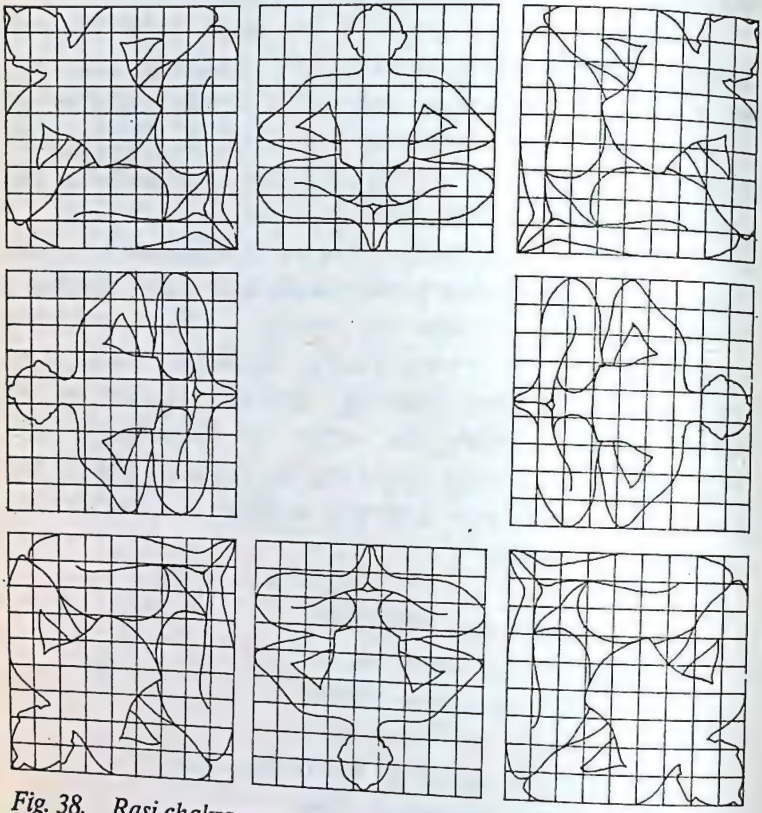


*Fig. 38. Rasi chakra or astrological time cycles superimposed on the Vaastu Purusha Mandala.*

*nathan, bhoomi purusha* and *vaastu purusha*. This is the energy of the material substance.

Similarly the energy of *akasham* or cosmic space is known as *vishwa purusha, vishwa atman, paramatman*.

The Vaastu Purusha is considered to be awake when he is oriented towards the cardinal points, and is said to be asleep when oriented towards the non-cardinal points like the NE, SW, SE, NW.

During the period of *Dhanur* (December-January), *Mina* (March-April), *Mithuna* (June-July), *Kanya* (September-October), it is considered inauspicious to begin building activities.

During the period of *Mesha* (April-May), *Vrishabha* (May-June), *Kataka* (July-August), *Simha* (August-September), *Tula* (October-November), *Vrichika* (November-December), *Makara* (January-February), *Kumbha* (February-March), it is auspicious to build.

The spin is clockwise and around its own centre. Like the Vaastu Purusha, all living beings are also material in their origins. Hence, they too are earth substance. It can be said that we too are earth or *bhoomi* and the energy within us is Vaastu Purusha. When the earth is dormant, the Vaastu Purusha is considered to be asleep. At this time it is not beneficial to begin house building activities. The Shastras state that this 'wrong' time could lead to negative effects on the residents. One must learn about the cycles of the earth before beginning auspicious acts. The face of the Vaastu Purusha is oriented towards the position of the sun, says the text. On the opposite side will be placed the feet of the Vaastu Purusha. His left hand will be placed below, the right hand above.

One school of thought says that the central axis or *madhya sutram* that runs through the Vaastu Purusha and the one which runs through the house should be

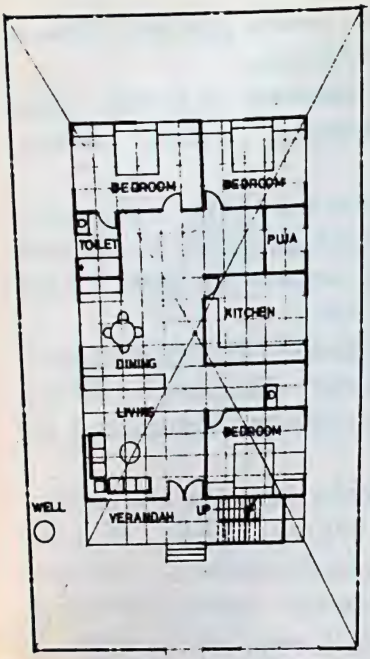



*Fig. 39. A west facing house with central points of house and site coinciding.*

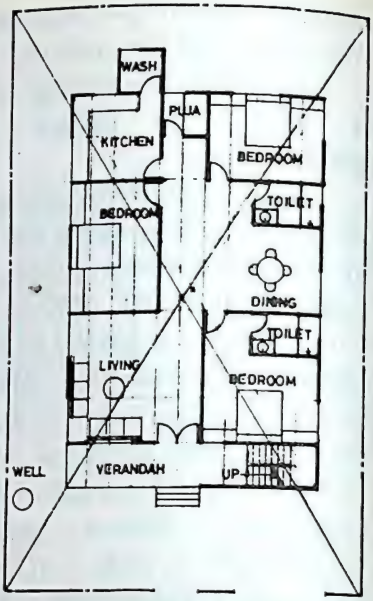



*Fig. 40. A north facing house with central points of house and site not coinciding.*

one and the same. The house is perceived as the manifest form of the Vaastu Purusha, i.e. the potential energy of the *purusha* which lies in the land is perceived as taking on the manifested form of the house (or building).

In another school of thought, the Vaastu Purusha set out on the plot and the building are superimposed in such a way that the central axes of both do not coincide.

In my personal experience I have found that the practice of coinciding the central axes for both building and land is very powerful in places of worship and commercial buildings, but not suitable for residences which require less energy in the inner spaces and more tranquillity for the users.

*Pada vinyasa* is the method by which a site of

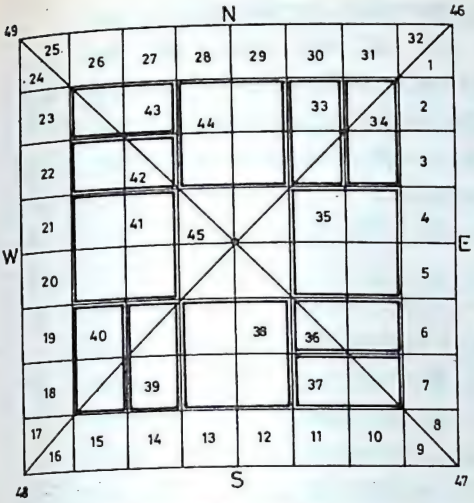
land is divided into a uniform grid. Each part of the grid is ascribed to a god, corresponding to the gods who were to have held the Vaastu Purusha down (stated earlier in the myth). Each of these modules are given an offering at the time of building, during the ceremony of *bhoomi puja*. The offerings are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Brahma: | Perfumes and garlands, incense, milk, honey, ghee, rice boiled in milk and roasted rice |
| Aaryaka: | Cake of fruits, cooked beans and sesame seeds |
| Vivasvant: | Curd |
| Mitra: | Durva grass |
| Bhoodhara: | Milk |
| Parjanya: | Clarified butter |
| Jayanta: | Fresh butter and flowers |
| Mahendra: | Entrails and flowers |
| Aditya: | Honey and onions |
| Satyaka: | Honey |
| Bhrusa: | Fresh butter |
| Antariksha: | Beans and turmeric |
| Agni: | Milk, ghee and *haldi* |
| Pusan: | Vegetables and milk |
| Vitatha: | Cooked *kanku* |
| Gruhakshata: | Intoxicating juice |
| Yama: | Vegetables |
| Gandharva: | Pure perfume |
| Bhringaraja: | Sea fish |
| Mrusha: | Rice with fish |
| Niruthi: | Sesame oil cake |
| Dauvarika: | Seeds of sesame |

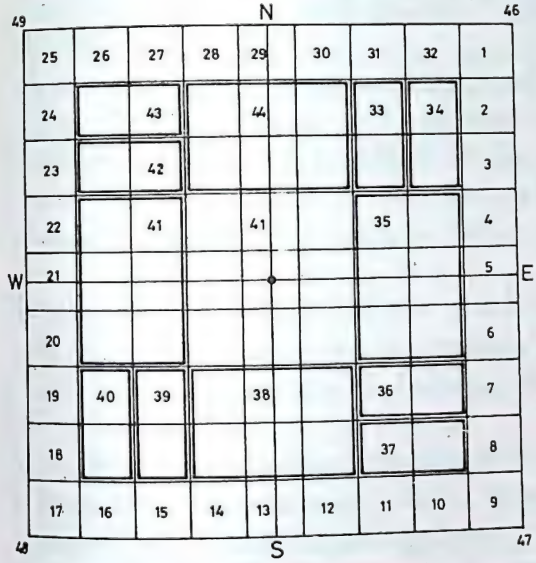
| | |
|---|---|
| Sugriva: | Cake |
| Pushpadanta: | Flowers and water |
| Varuna: | Rice and milk |
| Asura: | Blood |
| Shosha: | Rice with sesame |
| Roga: | Dried fish |
| Vayu: | Fat and yellow rice |
| Naga: | Wine and roasted rice |
| Mukhya: | Flour, curds and ghee |
| Bhallata: | Cooked rice with molasses |
| Soma: | Milk rice |
| Mriga: | Dried meat |
| Aditi: | Cake |
| Uditi: | Sesame rice |
| Isaana: | Rice and ghee |
| Savindra: | Roasted rice |
| Saavindra: | Perfumed water |
| Indra and Indrajaya: | Goat fat and crushed beans |
| Rudra and Rudra raja: | Meat and fat |
| Apa and Apavatsa: | Lotus and the flesh of shellfish and tortoise |
| Charaki: | Wine and roasted rice |
| Vidaari: | Salt |
| Putana and Paparakshasi: | Bean water |

The cosmic being and the earthly being are in synchronicity. The cosmic being holds the entire universe within himself while the earthly being or Vaastu Purusha reflects the heavenly gods in every part of his body.

*The universal form of the Lord was revealed to Arjuna thus—The splendour of a thousand*




MANDUKAMANDALA
(8 X 8 = 64 SQUARES)




PARAMASAYIKA MANDALA
(9 X 9 81 SQUARES)

1 ISANA
2 PARJANYA
3 JAYANTA
4 INDRA
5 ADITYA
6 SATYAKA
7 BHRSA
8 ANTARIKSA
9 AGNI
10 PUSA
11 VITATHA
12 GRHAKSATA
13 YAMA
14 GANDHARVA
15 BHRNGA
16 MRGA
17 NIRRTI
18 DWARAPALA
19 SUGRIVA
20 PUSPADANTA
21 VARUNA
22 ASURA
23 SOSA
24 ROGA
25 VAYU
26 NAGA
27 MUKHYA
28 BHALLATA
29 SOMA
30 ARGA
31 ADITI
32 DITI
33 APA
34 APAVATSA
35 ARYAKA
36 SAVITA
37 SAVITR
38 VIVASWAM
39 INDRA
40 INDRAJIT
41 MITRAKA
42 RUDRA
43 RUDRAJIT
44 BHUBHRT
45 BRAHMA
46 CHARAKI
47 VIDARI
48 PUTANA
49 PAPARAKSHASI

*Fig. 41. The site divide into two types of mandala, one with 8x8 divisions, the other with 9x9 divisions.*

*suns would be comparable to the splendour of His being. He saw all the Gods, all the beings within this form. Neither the beginning nor the end could be perceived. The space between heaven and earth and all the quarters are filled by His presence.*
Bhagavad Gita (Ch. 11, V.9, 12, 15, 20)

*Vaastu Purusha or the subtle spirit which pervades the earth, is responsible for the good and bad fortunes of the building. The forty-five devas are located on the Vaastu and within this the body of the Purusha described. The wise must avoid tormenting His limbs with the limbs of the house, otherwise sorrows would fall upon the owners.*
Mayamatam (Ch 7, 54, 55, 56)

The earlier mentioned *marmasthana* are very significant in this context. The walls, columns and structural elements of the building should be carefully planned so that they do not 'break' or 'torture' the *marmasthana* and subtle energy lines of the Vaastu Purusha.

The time of building, the location of facilities, the orientation of the building, the structural elements in the building are all decided in consonance with the Vaastu Purusha.

In the design of buildings and villages there are three major principles of design that are considered central for all design processes in the tradition—*bhogadyam, sukha darsham, ramya*; *pada vinyasa* or *Vaastu Purusha Mandala*; *ayadi poruttam*. The detailed application of the principles of vaastu in field design will be handled in the next chapter.

## RITUALS IN VAASTU

The twentieth century has seen the discarding of many traditional practices, beliefs and ideas. Out of a wide host of subjects that have either been forgotten or disowned because the 'modern' mind considers it shameful, one of the areas of contention the world over has been that of 'religious belief' and 'ritualistic practices'.

Many gory and often meaningless rituals that are carried out in the name of faith are indeed difficult for the rational mind to digest. But at the same time an unexamined dismissal of all belief and ritual as being evil is again a double bind, a fact which has been realized rather late by many countries. The life energy of people and groupings are gathered from a celebrative and interactive link with the natural system. When all celebration also falls into the category of 'blind belief then we are tampering with the spontaneous impulses of a people towards the awesome nature of reality. Whatever scientific explanation may be given, who can ever watch untouched the early morning sunrise over the ocean? Or the flight of birds through the silent dusk sky? Poetry, beauty, love and sensuousness are all deeply linked with primal rhythms and natural vibrations. Hence, to celebrate with water and flowers, to dance with the wind and to sing with the birds are all deeply ingrained in collective behaviour.

The Vaastu Shastras are full of ritualistic data that pertain to the relationship of a person to the earth (*bhoomi*) or with the energies (*vaastu devata*) or to the trees (*vana mahotsavam, vana muhurtam*).

To understand the right time to plant, to sow, to build, to reap, and to expand businesses are all part of the Vaastu Shastras.

Many important functions such as the following

have been pointed out in the texts:

*Vaastu Muhurtam.* After referring to the *Panchangam* or Indian calendar, the right time is chosen to inaugurate the site and to propitiate the energies. The time chosen is when the Vaastu Purusha is awake and therefore capable of participating in the ceremony in a powerful manner. As already stated, the Vaastu Purusha is awake during eight months of the year and asleep in the other four. (Eight months of wakefulness–*Mesha, Vrishabha, Kataka, Simha, Tula, Vrichika, Makara, Kumbha.* Four months of sleep–*Dhanur, Mina, Mithuna, Kanya.*)

*Bhoomi Puja.* Usually this *puja* is carried out at the same time as *vaastu muhurtam.* A small 64-part diagram denoting the *manduka padam* and the Vaastu Purusha within it is marked in the NE part of the property using different seeds and colouring substances. To each of the *devas* of this mandala, the chants and the offerings mentioned earlier are made. It is also common to make a test pit in the NE in which the first bricks or stones are placed during the *bhoomi puja.* An effigy of the Vaastu Purusha is made in straw and burnt. This is to ward off evil spirits. It is recommended that this ritual be carried out in the morning.

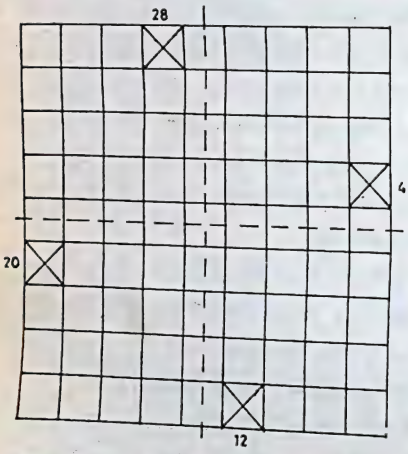



*Fig 42. A 9x9 mandala with locations marked for the Garbhanyasa ritual.*

*Garbhanyasa.* This is a ritual carried out to bring

alive the building and its spaces. It is recommended that this ritual be carried out in the evening or night after the building has been completed and it is ready for occupation.

For the ritual a specific location is picked and a small cavity is dug out into which a box made of copper or silver is placed. It may have nine or twenty-five compartments which is a mandala form known as *peetha padam* (nine), *upapeetha padam* (twenty-five). In the compartment facing east, offerings to Surya and Indra are made in silver and gold, in the south to Yama and Simha in iron and gold, in the west to Varuna in silver, in the north to Soma in silver, and similarly to all the other directions. Nine grains, nine gems, minerals and herbs are placed in the box. The bottom of the cavity or pit should have earth from different places. First stones or bricks are placed and over these the box is placed. This is then covered with a wooden lid and placed in the cavity. The cavity is filled up amidst chanting and prayer.

This box or casket is held to be the source of life and movement. By placing it with its offerings to the energies, the building comes alive. *Garbha* means the womb, hence this is the womb or life-defining ritual. The ritual may be carried out in the centre or *brahmasthana*, or in the north, west, east, south, on one side of the central axis (to the right facing from the outside).

*Kumbhabhishekam*. This ritual is usually carried out for temples. After the temple structure has been completed, and the image of the Divine One placed in the *garbhagriha* or sanctum, the *kalasam* or bronze urn is placed on the top of the outer structure. With holy water that has been purified through *puja*, the *kalasam* is finally cleansed. It is this final ritual which marks the completion of a temple and with which it promises that

the temple is now ready for the dialogue between the community and the gods.

*Griha Pravesam.* In residences, the final action of purifying and making ready the space for occupation is called *Griha Pravesham.* The planets and the *devas* are propitiated, Vinayaka invoked, the space sprinkled with holy water, and sanctified with the sacred Vedic ritual. After this ceremony, the inhabitants may move into the built space and start their new lives.

With all these rituals, the tradition has helped people understand the intrinsic and extraordinary relationship they share with their physical and spiritual environment. There is no connection with organized religion in any of the rituals, they take on an almost tribal character in the offering of energy back to the earthly systems.

# 5

# Design Methodology

An architect or designer is trained to respond to the information given by the client. Based on this, the designer puts together a 'design brief' and evolves a design form. This brief usually contains the various elements of design such as: site location, size of plot, direction of entry, area requirement, local building rules, budget for the building, materials for construction, reuse of old doors and windows, direction of rain and wind and so on. To attempt to design anything, whether a building or a machine or an art item, without comprehending the design parameters would be an act of irresponsibility. One hears of so many unusual houses built for their exciting exteriors, which either leak when it rains or are dangerous for children and generally beset with flaws. Similarly, one also hears of simple unpretentious buildings which are comfortable to live in. There should be no short-cuts in designing something that is appropriate in its application and use. Detailed background work that takes into account all the constraints and possibilities is essential before coming up with suggestions.

What do we look for when we build a home?

- A user-friendly design with amenities well laid out, simple and easy to maintain. Accessibility to basic amenities should be very straightforward and

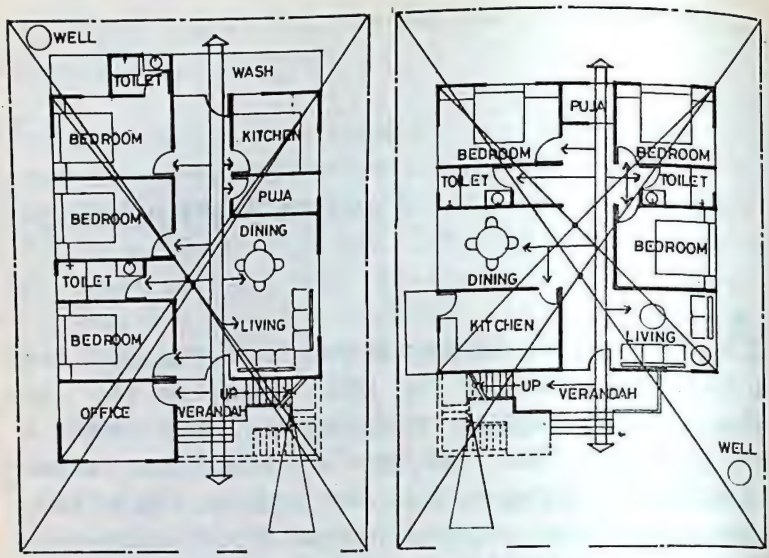



*Fig. 43 a & b. East facing houses developed by author with movement and rest held in balance.*

conform to the lifestyle of the family, for example, the kitchen opening out into the living room in a traditional family is most uncomfortable since the woman may not like being seen by a visitor while cooking. Amenities including storage spaces, washing facilities, rain protection, comfortable areas for gatherings and other aspects should also be kept in mind.

- Ventilation is an important aspect of a building. There should be ample light and breeze in all the rooms.
- A house should evoke an atmosphere of psychological comfort. Primarily, it should be conducive to the well-being of the family.
- A house should be aesthetically pleasing. Even if it is a simple and economical building it should

not be unattractive or ugly. In small ways, the overall effect must give visual and inward *anubhava* (aesthetic pleasure).

- The air circulation and layout in general should make the house comfortable to live in.

What can vaastu offer us in answer to these questions? Let us take a look at this.

In the space set out for the building (or the built vaastu), the overall pattern of movement and repose needs to be marked. Out of this physical chart the psychological 'being' of the house should be evolved.

As far as possible, the activity and repose chart should not be imbalanced. There is no absolute answer for this, only flexible subjective patterns which would be dependent on each situation. For example, the theme of a design could be in a pattern of activity and repose in two different sides, both balancing off the structure.

Another type could be with pockets of activity and repose in loose combinations, each blending and leading out of the other.

Either of these

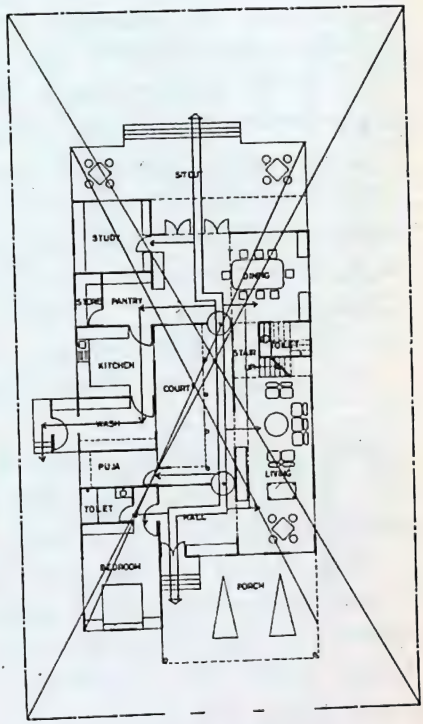



*Fig. 44. Movement axis shifted so that repose can be achieved in centre independent of movement lines.*

concepts achieve a balance provided that the physical and psychological spaces reflect and enhance the lifestyle of the occupants.

## SITE SELECTION

Today, the designer is offered the site drawing by the client and proceeds to design the building in it. Traditionally, the designer was also involved in the choice of the site. Perhaps this aspect needs to be emphasized once again as a house or other building affects, and is affected by its environment.

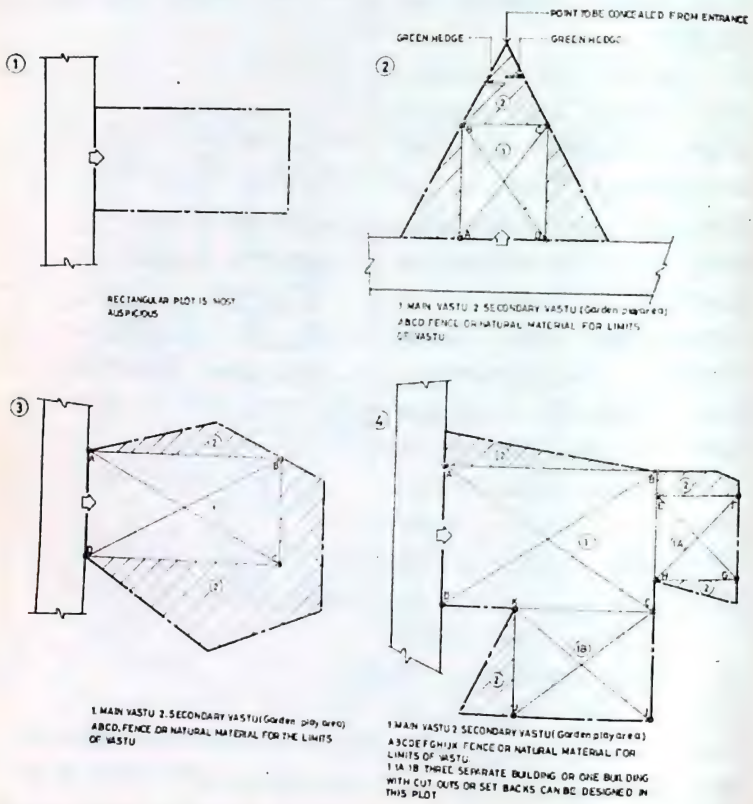



*Fig. 45. Different types of plots.*

*Shape of the plot.* Odd-shaped plots have not been considered auspicious for building in the tradition of vaastu. This does not mean that we say 'no' to any plot that is not rectangular or square. What it implies is that the actual building plot needs to be defined either by means of a fence, a wall or with pillars demarcating the boundary. The plot meant for construction should ideally be a geometric form such as a square or a rectangle. The remaining portion of the site may be used as a garden or a playground.

*Composition of earth.* The characteristics and composition of soil are very important for two reasons. One is the load-bearing capacity of the soil which defines the type of foundation to be employed, the other is the ability of the land to sustain vegetation. The designer would (traditionally) observe the site for one season at least to ascertain whether the soil is fertile, holds water and sustains life forms such as plants, birds and animals. Any soil that is incapable of regeneration would be set aside as bad for human habitation. From an ecological point of view this analysis is extremely wise and can be added to the responsibilities of the designer.

*Natural gradation.* All sites have some gradation already existing in the land (refilled plots are different). The designer has to examine this and build as sensitively as possible using the natural gradation to advantage.

Water points, staircases, sewage disposal should take into account this gradation of land in the design. Some slopes considered auspicious are, SW to NE, N to S, or W to E. This does not mean that other slopes are wrong, or that one should artificially create a particular slope. Whatever the direction of the slope, it must be utilized effectively. One interpretation for the importance of slopes in vaastu is that each direction of

the slope is meant for each community. This could well be a practical consideration where water source and sewage is concerned so that the entire neighbourhood, village or city could have its waterways well worked out. The impact of negative values to directions seems to have been a later addition, perhaps to prevent mixing of communities.

Another interpretation is based on their historical and social significance. The human clusters were originally tribal in nature which expanded into kingdoms at a later stage. Therefore, each province or kingdom had its limits and fortification with large walls and moats; the same fortification was also carried out in villages and towns. Slopes that assisted the tribe or kingdom to keep out the enemy were, naturally, much more valuable than those which helped the enemy to enter the kingdom easily. Hence, the southern and western high points sloping towards north and east were preferred, since most of the invaders came in from the north. But slopes must be seen only as characteristics of larger settlements; obviously the smaller units or plots would not exhibit the same characteristics.

A third interpretation is that different slopes for different communities were specified to take care of specialized needs. Certain communities had livestock in their garden, some had workshops with effluent channels, others had gardens for flowers and herbs and so on. For practical reasons, the slopes had to be handled carefully to prevent the contamination of water. It stands to reason that on the western slopes of mountains the highest point would be east, on southern slopes of hills the highest point would be north and so on. Each set of slopes has to be carefully understood and the pattern of water storage, effluent treatment judiciously worked out. Such comprehensive planning can be seen even in the layout of the city of Mohenjo Daro around three to four millennia ago.

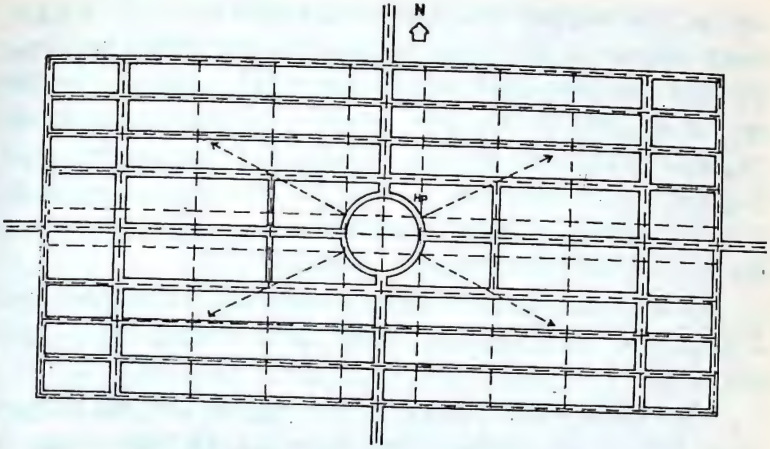



*Fig. 46. A typical town-planning layout set out in the traditional Vaastu texts.*

This example (above) of a well-planned city recommended by the texts has a temple in the centre which is the highest point of the layout. All the surrounding land gradually slopes down from this on all four sides so that the whole town, as it were, looks

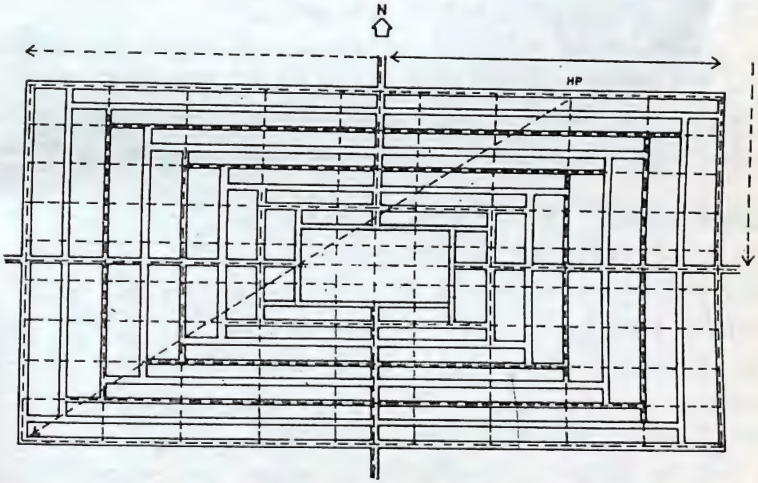



*Fig. 47. Another town-planning.*

up to the temple and the image within. In this case, each sector of the town would have a different slope eg. (1) The NE sector would have high point in the SW and low point in the NE, (2) the SE sector would be highest in the NW, lowest in the SE, (3) the SW sector highest point would be in the NE, the lowest point in the SW, (4) In the NW sector the highest point would be in the SE and lowest in the NW.

The entire slope of the town must be considered before the independent water and sewage lines are planned.

In figure 47 the town is laid out on the SW slopes of a hill or mountain. Therefore the highest point is along the NE end of the outer ring road.

In the NE sector, the high point is along the northern limit and the low point is towards south.

In the SE sector, the high point is along the northern limit and the low point towards south.

In the SW sector, the high point is in NE and the low point towards SE, SW and NW.

In the NW sector, the high point is along the E-axis and the low point towards NW and SW.

This layout is highly complex, and unless the high and low points are planned at the larger township stage, chances are that the water storage and sewage disposal may become confused as well as dysfunctional.

*Water source.* The location of water in a site is one of the most important aspects of design. (This, of course refers to sites where it is possible to tap the water source. Usually, in cities, residents have the facility of piped water.) There are several ways in which water sources can be tapped. The texts state that water on the north or east is beneficial but when a water source is not possible or available in these two sides, any suitable location can be accepted. This is true for both individual buildings and for group housing. It is only

logical that the natural slope of land, the water source and the collection of rain water would be symbiotically linked. Water is also divined through various methods, hence the location of good water in the proposed site or settlement is a cause for great jubilation. Its direction becomes secondary.

For example, I once worked with a person whose existing well was located on the north of his site and it had been originally divined by a very well-respected water diviner. Unfortunately, in spite of my reassurance on the suitability of the well, the client decided to take the advice of a vaastu well-wisher and placed his new well in the north-east corner of the property. The water here was salty, and even worse, so close to the septic tank on the adjoining property that it became contaminated very soon. Now, they have abandoned this new well and are continuing to use the old well which nurtured and maintained the family for two generations.

There are several authoritative texts of vaastu, the *Mayamatam* being one of them. Interestingly, in several examples of layouts of towns and villages, plans of palaces and houses, the text gives a variety of locations for water source, kitchen, bath areas, animal sheds and bedrooms. This does not mean that the author is confused, but that the layout can be changed according to the local conditions. After analysing the water sources in the N, NE, SE, S, SW, W, NW, the author explains that any location is valid for water sources. One of the principles for village and town planning is that water tanks, reservoirs and wells should be built wherever there is a need for water. This is obviously the best way.

There are negative connotations given in some texts regarding water reservoirs situated in the south-east, south-west and north-west parts of settlements. All other directions such as the east, south, west, north, north-east

are said to be good. There is so much contradiction with regard to water sources that one wonders if it was a localized rule, based on civic reasons so that clean water and sewage could be clearly discriminated.

In today's context I advise the serious vaastu scholars and householders to go by the most fundamental of principles—locate water wherever it is copiously available. Once good water has been tapped the direction is unimportant. It is not unlike a situation in a love marriage where the minds of the couple have responded to each other and therefore, the matching of horoscopes becomes redundant (in fact it should not be done, says the tradition).

## ESTABLISHING CARDINAL DIRECTIONS

In all the great civilizations, the cardinal directions have been accepted as having a deep significance to the life of human beings on earth. Facing each of the directions for a particular type of activity has been given mystic meanings in each society. Therefore, to set up a perfect NS, EW axis on the site is a very important aspect of design. After plotting the NS, EW axes, the plot or vaastu should

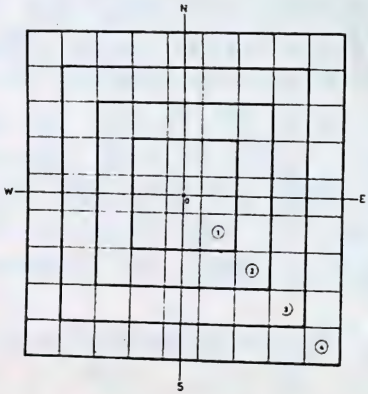



*Fig. 48. The plot must have its physical centre marked. This is known as brahmasthana.*

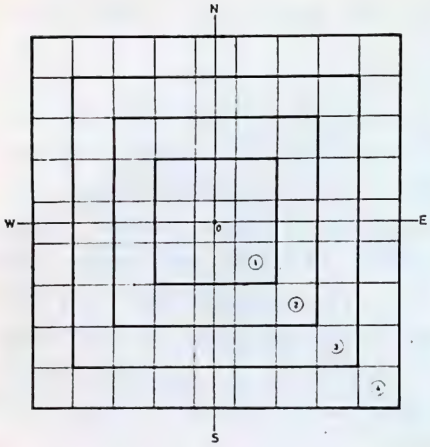
be set out into modules. This procedure is known as *pada vinyaasa.*

*Brahmasthana.* This is the centre of the plot. In the design it is important to create a centre for the building which grows into the total form. This growth out of the centre is comparable to the 'experience of centre' that is spoken about in the field of traditional dance and music where creative action is brought out from the centre (called the *nabhi*). In yoga also, the centering of the body consciousness is stressed. For any meaningful action to emerge, the weight and energy of the form is anchored in the centre.

*The Brahma Pada or Veethi.* This is the central area of the total form which includes the central point. In the process of design the *brahma pada* is considered to have very high concentration of energy (of the total form). Therefore traditionally it was either opened out as the courtyard or made into a central hall for collective gathering.

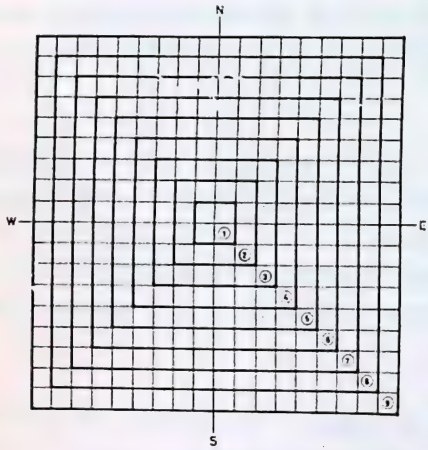
*The Deivika Padam or Veethi.* This is the first concentric space around the central *brahma pada.* In this space the energies are considered to be fairly high and so the allocation of passages and rooms for collective rather than individual use such as dining, family rooms are recommended here.

*The Manusha Padam or Veethi.* The second concentric space, this space is considered to contain energy which is fairly comfortable for human activity and therefore, all activity rooms such as kitchen, bedrooms, study areas, puja and rooms for individual use may be placed in this part of the layout.




1. BRAHMA VITHI (brahma padam)
2. DEVA VITHI (deivika padam)
3. MANUSHYA VITHI (manusha padam)
4. PAISACHA VITHI (paisacha padam)

*Fig. 49. The Vaastu Purusha Mandala is further divided into concentric levels of energy and use known as pada, veethi or aavarna.*




1. BRAHMA
2. GANESA
3. AGNI
4. JALA
5. NAGA
6. YAMA
7. KUBERA
8. DEVA
9. PISACA

*Fig. 50. The Vaastu Purusha Mandala is further divided.*

*The Paisaacha Padam or Veethi.* The final concentric space which can contain the storage areas, outer verandah, external walls, outer walkways as also activity areas such as bedrooms and work rooms. In general, *manusha* and *paisaacha* may be considered together for all special activity areas.

Figure 51 shows a typical town plan as set out in the *vaastu* texts with its disciplined grid pattern of roads and building plots. The central square which is surrounded by roads is usually left open, or utilized for a religious building. The central religious experience of a people defines a certain psycho-spiritual quest and meaning of the people.

Figure 52 shows the temple town of Srirangam. The modular nature of traditional design is clearly visible. The concentric growth of the city or town around its central religious nexus is a very important part of the Indian traditions of urban design. The Srirangam temple layout is one of the most complex cities. The main temple lies in the centre with subsidiary shrines and residential quarters as well as shops and commercial quarters laid out in the outer rings of the temple plan.

In the final built form, the outer peripheral rooms would contain specialized activity such as sleeping, cooking, storing, bathing while the inner areas would be for relaxing and conversing. This does not mean that a living room cannot be on the outer side but it certainly means that a bedroom cannot be in the centre. Even from the practical aspects of fresh air and sunlight this principle is very sensible.

## SETTING UP A DESIGN BRIEF

The contemporary designer creates a brief in the following manner.

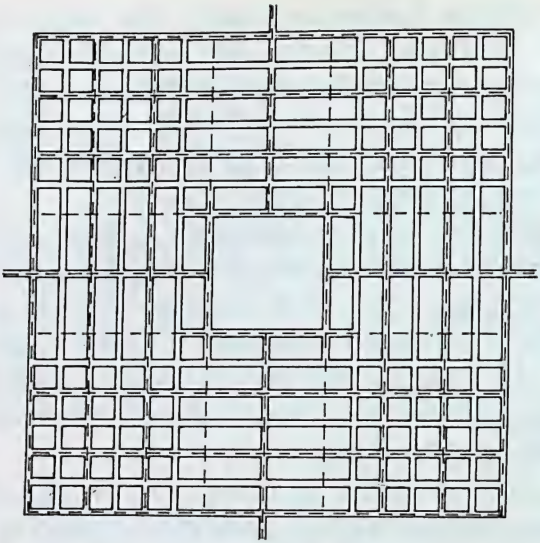


*Fig. 51. Town plan set out in Vaastu texts. A general layout in which the centre has been demarcated for religious purposes.*

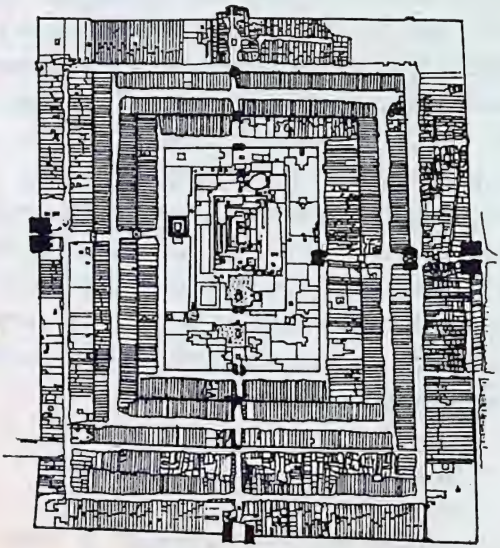


*Fig. 52. Town plan of Srirangam.*

- Name and statistical data of the client, including size of family, future growth, budget for the building.
- Flow chart of activities and location of facilities.
- Special needs such as family rooms, equipment rooms, gymnasium, study and others.
- Area breakup.
- Tentative scheme.
- Tentative costing.

All these aspects are important and have their place in the design process. But a well-organized house which has all the right storage spaces and support systems cannot become a home, and cannot create a unique environment for a specific family. For this 'uniqueness', aesthetics, and comfort to take place in a design, there are a few pointers that we can take from the traditional concepts of design. The tradition of vaastu speaks of five important processes of design. They are: ecosensitivity, philosophy of design, understanding of building materials, knowledge of aesthetics and the comprehension of energy fields.

- The traditional designer must become aware of the larger ecosystem within which the building is being built. He/She must study the land, its lie, its terrain, the quality of vegetation existing in it, the surrounding buildings and street character to come up with a design suitable for the specific location. A building that does not blend with its neighbours is considered 'interesting' today but traditionally this would be discarded as a meaningless egotistic statement which disrupts the harmony of a neighbourhood.
- The designer must become familiar with the lifestyle and nature of the family so as to evolve

*Fig. 53. A bamboo and cane bridge in north-east India.*

a philosophy of design. For example, an introverted house with its internal courtyard or garden has a different ambience to one which is more open to its environment. The design style adopted would change according to the particular philosophical belief. This can be taken as an essential ingredient for the contemporary design process when houses are beginning to either resemble boxes or museums.

- Whether using simple materials like earth and sun-dried bricks, or high cost materials like brick, stone and concrete, the designer must comprehend the nature of materials, their location in a larger context, and attempt to create harmony in the mind of the user. This is true for both colour and form. A building may look arresting when it combines an octagonal form of design with stone walls and purple leather for inner walls, which may help the

designer to get his/her name in a magazine, but the negative effect on the user would be incalculable. There is enough information available from psychologists telling us that disturbing colours and forms harm the mind even in sleep.

- Hence, form, space, colour, light and shade must all be juxtaposed to create a pleasing ambience. This aesthetics, the tradition says, is created out of a rhythmic design methodology. Whether in the plan or in the elevation, the built space is divided into modules which are always in balance with each other. The effect of such a rhythm on the psyche of the occupant would be beneficial, healing and enriching. The smallest element in the space (whether a piece of furniture or a column) would be a fraction of the width or height of the room.
- The facilities which the house contains should also be located in such a way as to create an energy field that is beneficial to the occupant.

## THE BUILT SPACE

The built space is divided into energy fields known as *pada vinyaasa* (modular grid) explained earlier. Several kinds of modular divisions have been recommended which can be broadly divided into two categories: odd number of modules (*ayugma*); even number of modules (*yugma*), which have different applications.

Spaces meant for constant activity with specific parameters and for individual use are usually kept on the outer rings, namely *paisaacha padam* and *manusha padam*. In the inner rings namely *deivika* and *brahma pada* which are considered to be high energy areas, it is not recommended to utilize these spaces for permanent individual use. It is therefore preferable that the inner rings be used for casual coming together, or

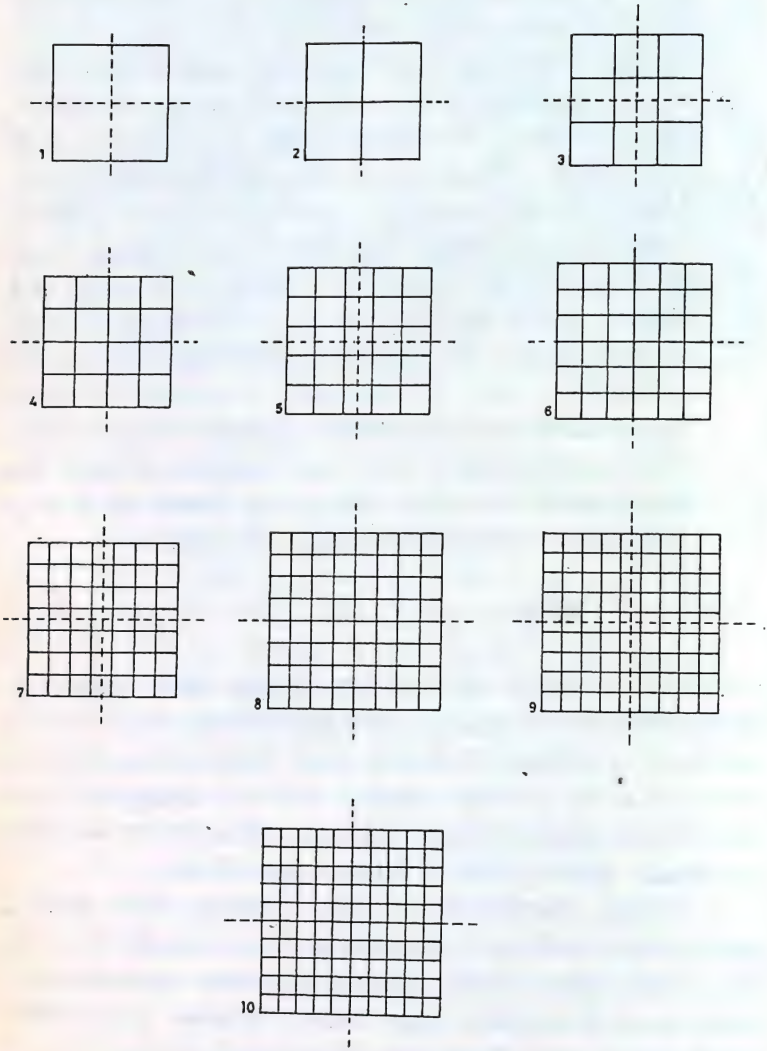



*Fig. 54. Different types of pada vinyasa for different applications from 1 to 10 modules.*

group activities such as recreation, relaxation, entertainment.

Figure 54 shows ten different types of modular layouts that can be used for a variety of designs, both for individual buildings and towns.

After setting out the outer shape and form of the building, and after dividing the built vaastu into a modular grid, the various activities within the building as well as the entrance door, water point, sewage and garden should be planned. Entry into the residence forms the most important part of the residence so let us start with the main door.

*Door*. The illustration in figure 55 (a,b,c) offer several locations for main doors and side doors in both residential and public buildings.

The entrance can face any direction provided the *ayadi* calculation is made using the birth-star of the owner. The location of the door has been specified as the following:

- The central module would be the place for the entrance door in the case of public and religious buildings.
- A module on either side of the central one would be the ideal location for the door in a residential building.

The door or *dwaram* is a symbol of the psyche of the occupiers. By crossing the entrance-threshold the visitor is being transported into the inner universe of a family. Traditionally the entrance door was treated with great sanctity.

*Kitchen*. Since SE is the direction of *agni*, it is commonly understood to be the most auspicious location for the

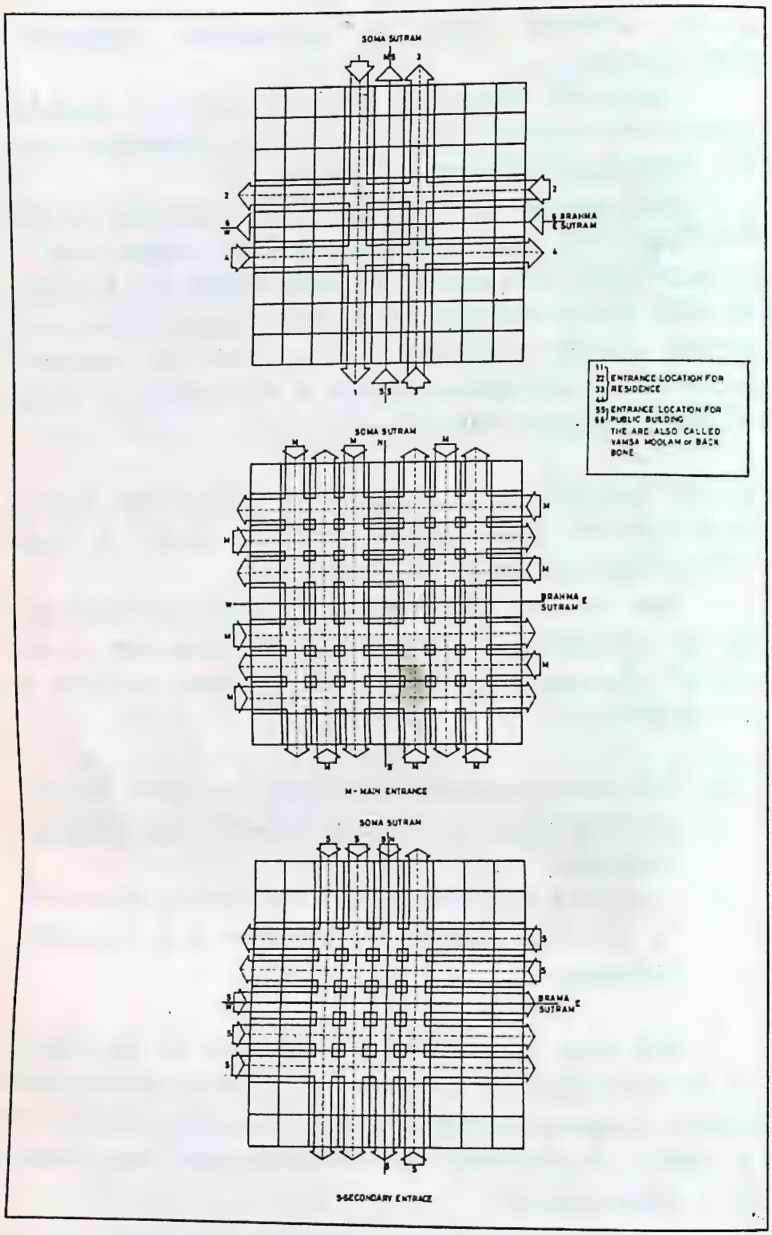



*Fig. 55. Locations for entrance - 1, locations for main entrance - 2, locations for secondary entrance -3.*

kitchen. But there are many alternatives that have been offered. Hence the kitchen may be placed on any side of the building depending upon the circulation of energies.

South east: Locating fire in fire is safe and comfortable on the one hand, but can also destroy all the creative energies of the occupants by superimposing physical fire on to spiritual fire.

South west: Locating fire in space can spread it to and occupy the entire form with the energy.

North west: Locating fire in air can dissipate and reduce the power of the wind, or add to the fury of the fire.

North east: Locating fire in water can bring about calmness to raging fires, and warmth and approachability to cold water.

Centre or *brahmasthana*: Locating fire in earth would create a volcano, a powerful inward awakening that is uncontainable. This is usually the location for the sacred sacrificial fire.

*Puja*. The eastern and northern side of the house would be ideal for the *puja*, but any other location is also fine provided the images of the Lord face east or north.

*Bedroom*. All locations are permitted, the bed can be SN or EW, and if the bedroom is in the SE the bed can be placed anywhere except the SE corner.

*Wells or Water storage*. This can be anywhere in the plot which has a natural stream, or specifically located in the NE, east or north of the building. A secondary location can be in the west of the building.

*Sewage*. This should be carefully selected as the point furthest from water source, and can be on any side.

Figure 56 gives several locations for water inlets and effluent outlets as per vaastu texts. The most rational choices would be for water and sewage in diametrically opposite sides. This layout is suitable for houses as well as for layout of towns.

*Staircase.* It may be on any side, as per design needs. It would be most logical to keep the staircase (if it is a closed room) on the side which has no natural breeze coming in. It is obvious that the staircase room would cut out the breeze. It is also logical to keep such a room on the side most affected by the monsoon, so as to prevent strong rains from lashing the house. Directions recommended are S, SW, W, NW and NE.

The location of facilities is not an arbitrary act of placing rooms in preconceived locations. This would take away the variety and excitement of design and replace it with identical solutions. Every room must have its connection with the overall form, the lifestyle of the family in residence, and the climate of the specific city or village. What applies to central India would be impractical for the coastal region or to the northern hillsides.

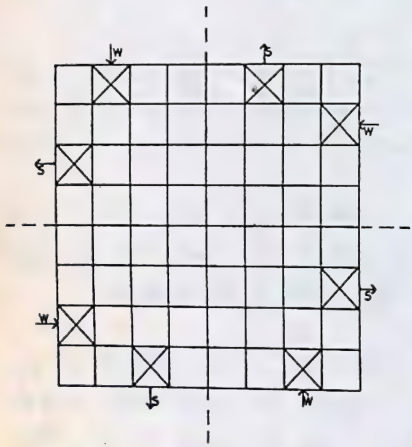



*Fig. 56. 8x8 module indicating the locations for water inlets and sewage outlets for individual buildings as well as settlements.*

## SHAPES AND PROPORTIONS

The layout of houses may be of four types. They are called—*ekasala, dwisala,*

*trisala, chatursala.*

This concept of *ekasala* can be explained in English as a 'wing' or building block. Thus, we have one block designs, two blocks or L-shape, three blocks or I_I shape and four blocks. Further additions to this such as 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 are possible. A seven block which is a combination of three and four, or a ten block which may be a combination of five two-blocks, of two four-blocks and a two-block. *Ekasala* is also known as *dandakam*, *dwisala* as *swastikam, trisala* as *maulikam*, and *chatursala* as *chaturmukham*. All other additions are known as *vardhamana* or growth.The following diagrams show the different types of combinations of the basic rectangular unit.

The house may be designed as one rectangle or *ekasala* or a series of rectangles. The individual rectangular unit is called *dandakam.*

The appropriate design shape may be chosen depending upon the site constraints and the needs of the client. The proportion of the rectangle is very important.

Figure 57 is a large plan of a palace using a *sarvato-bhadram* form of layout with its many wings, verandahs, courtyards, staircases, porticos and domes.

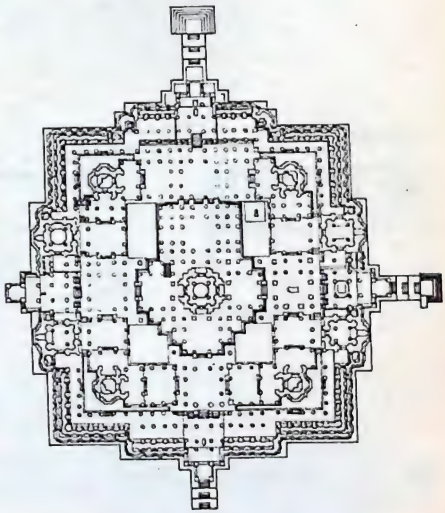


*Fig. 57. Plan of Ranakpur temple in Rajasthan. It has a sarvato-bhadram layout.*

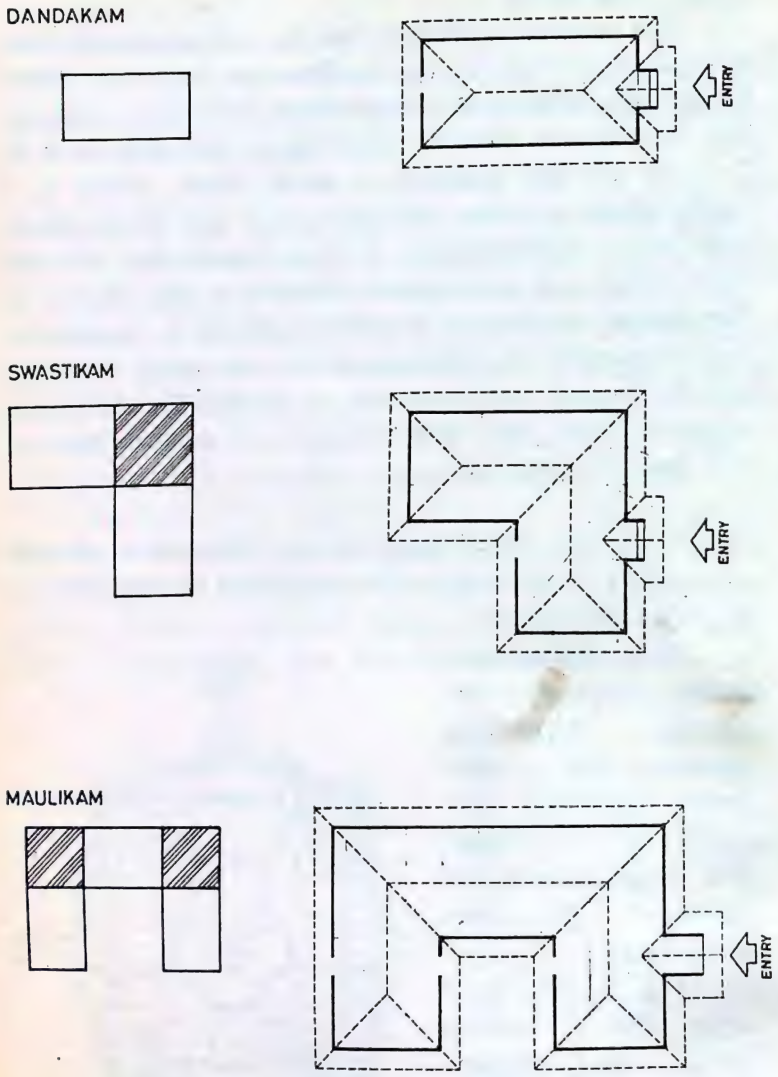
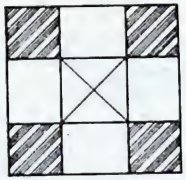
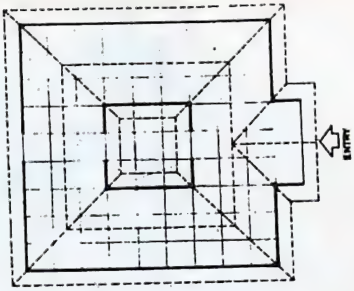


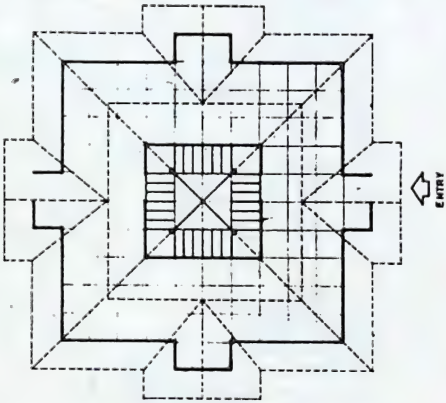

*Fig. 58. Six types of designs recommended by the tradition.*
*1. Single unit or dandakam.*
*2. Two unit plan with one joint called swastikam.*
*3. Three unit plan with two joints called maulikam.*

CHATURMUKAM

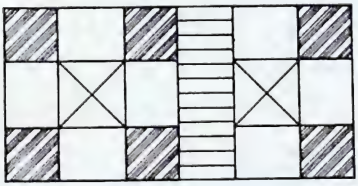





SARVATOBHADRAM




VARDHAMANAM



*4a. Four unit plan with four joints called chaturmukham.*
*4b. Another version of the chaturmukham known as sarvatobhadram which consists of a chaturmukham with four projections on all four sides as well as a continuous verandah all round.*
*5. In this example it is a chaturmukham and maulikam put together.*

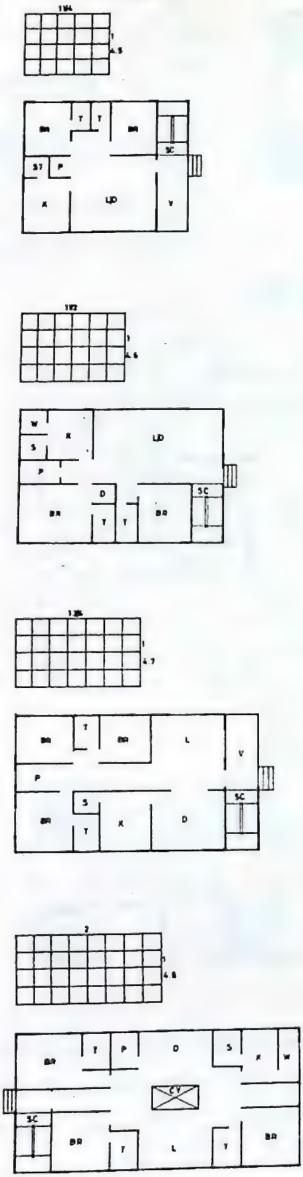
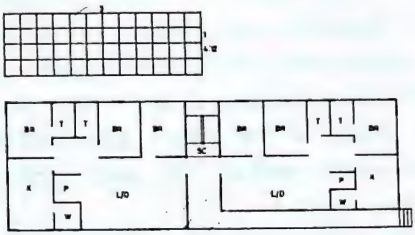
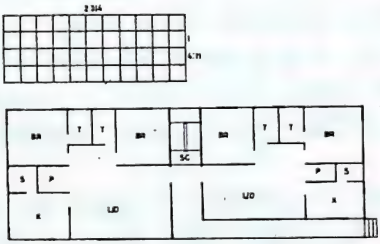
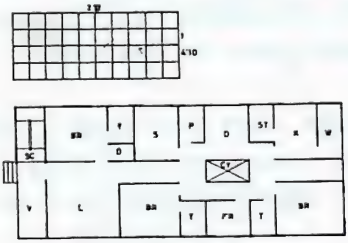
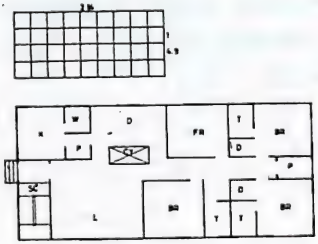



*Fig. 59. Proportions recommended in the traditional Vaastu texts between width and length of buildings.*
*1. 1:1-1/4 2. 1:1-1/2 3. 1:1-3/4 4. 1:2*









*5. 1:2-1/4 6. 1:2-1/2 7. 1:2-3/4 8. 1:3*

*Proportions: Length and Width.* Traditionally, the length and width of any building were kept proportionate to each other. The following are examples of designs which have a clear relationship between length and width. Please note that the entrance is from the shorter side. In the last two types it has been assumed that there are two separate units within the site, with a passage leading to the rear unit.

In general the proportion most favoured for *ekasala* or *dandakasala* is 1:2. More than this has been perceived as being out of proportion for a single block.

In particular, this type of *ekasala* which has the length equal to twice the width is considered most suitable for Buddhist monks and *sanyasin*, adds the *Mayamatam*.

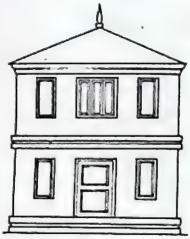
Similarly, the proportion of width to height of the building is also important. The kind of aesthetics that is developed, the type of roof to be built are all secondary to the proportion that is to be employed. Note the five types given in figure 60.

*Heights of buildings.* Next the height of the building is determined, again based on the width. Five kind of heights have been recommended of which any one may be chosen.

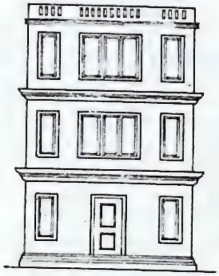
- Shantikam—width equal to height 1:1.
- Paushtikam—height equal to one and a quarter times the width 1:1¼
- Jayadam—1:1½
- Ghanam—1:1¾
- Adbhuta—1:2

These five are suitable for all buildings. But a separate proportion has been recommended for temples alone.

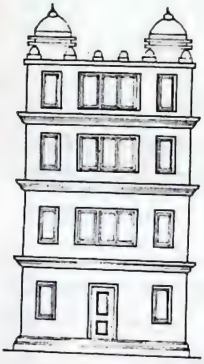
1. SHANTIKAM



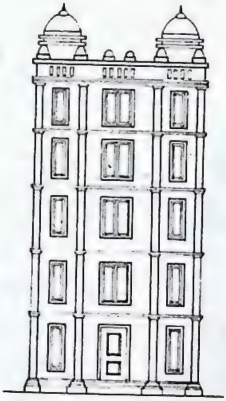
2. PAUSHTIKAM



3. JAYADAM



4 DHANADAM



5 ADBHUTAM

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | = 1 : 1 | (4 : 4) |
| 2 | = 1 : 1 1 4 | (4 : 5) |
| 3 | = 1 : 1 1 2 | (4 : 6) |
| 4 | = 1 : 1 3 4 | (4 : 7) |
| 5 | = 1 : 2 | (4 : 8) |

*Fig. 60. Proportions recommended in the traditional Vaastu texts between width and height of buildings.*

- Shantikam—1:13/7
- Paushtikam—1:1½
- Jayadam—1:1¾
- Adbhuta—1:2
- Sarvakamikam—1:2⅛

The *ekasala* as a design solution has been strongly recommended in *Mayamatam* for certain kinds of people such as the following:

- Devas
- Brahmins
- Pashandas (Atheists)
- Ashram
- Elephant sheds
- Horse sheds
- Garage for chariots
- Barracks for the army
- Shilpis
- Courtesans

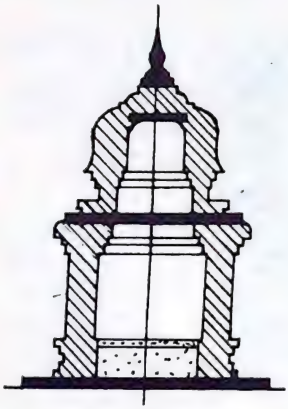


*Fig. 61. Kanda harmyamor cupola can be made similar to a small temple which can also be employed in the profile of residences.*

Though these uses have been recommended, the general rule is that the four types of *salas* such as *eka, dwi, tri,* and *chatur (dandakam, swastikam, maulikam, chaturmukham)* are equally applicable for all types of people as residences.

*Number of storeys.* The text further states

that the residential building may be composed of a ground floor structure alone, or have more than one floor. The top may be finished with all the ornamentations such as *kanda harmyam or karna harmyam* or left unadorned.

AYADI PORUTTAM

Ayadi literally means 'income and others'. Income, in this context, stands for all energy inputs whether in terms of money, health, children, happiness, friendship or spiritual strength.

In order to foster this income and bring about prosperity in all walks of life, the following calculations or *ayadi poruttam* are made:

To begin with the module *(padam)* which is being adopted for the design should be checked against the birth-star *(janma nakshatram)* of the owners for it to act in a beneficial manner on them. The width or perimeter of the building may also be calculated for benefits. In houses which may grow in parts over time, the perimeter may keep changing, therefore either the module or width may be taken as the primary measure for subsequent beneficial calculation.

The calculation is carried out to achieve total well-being and prosperity in all the above ways. Today there are market forces at work that emphasize only the monetary aspects of *ayadi*, such as expecting irrationally high profits. It is well known even in modern management strategies that disproportionately high profits create problems either healthwise or in human interactions. Therefore, the calculation should be aimed at the following:

- To create a sense of well-being.
- To balance monetary income and expense so that there is no loss.

- To achieve work excellence.
- To effect an aura of contentment and spiritual satisfaction in the built space.
- To enhance learning and curiosity.
- To allow for growth and prosperity.

The abiding balance between user-friendly utilitarianism, aesthetics and inward harmony are what have lent the older designs such as pyramids, cathedrals and temples of the past with a timeless character.

Let me try and blend the design methodology of the Vaastu Shastras with the requirements imposed on a designer today.

- Site selection
- Establishing the cardinal directions
- Creating a centre, Pada Vinyasam.
- Setting up a design brief.
  - Particular building and the larger system.
  - Local materials, local labour.
  - Philosophy of design.
  - Rhythms, proportions.
  - Location of facilities.
- Ayadi poruttam

By adapting the age-old practices of building design into the framework of contemporary design it is possible for a new paradigm of Indian design and aesthetics to emerge.

# 6

# Relevance of Vaastu

Vaastu is being increasingly used as a tool to analyse the role of a building in the health and fortunes of its inhabitants. To understand this trend we have to go back to our earlier analysis of the three types of vaastu–Srishthi, Chikitsa and Vardhamana. In each of these types of vaastu, there is an element of integration between the occupant and the building, between the environmental energies and the lifestyle of the people. This relationship can actually be predicted, say some experts, therefore certain fixed locations and characteristics can be proposed to contain negative energies.

Before analysing the rationale to predictive vaastu, let us look at some traditional techniques for creating well-being in the built space. Certain passive solar and environment-friendly devices have been set out in the traditional building technique which add positive energies into a building including air and light, and remove negative energies such as toxic gases, microbes and viruses. Let us look at some of them.

## 1. THE CENTRAL COURTYARD

In almost all the parts of the country, the courtyard has been adopted as a device for physical well-being as well as spiritual contentment. Be it an individual building with its private court, or group dwellings with their

quadrangle, the open space has been integrated into the life and relationships of the people. The hot summer months become bearable because of this open court and in winters too they play their part in community gatherings. The central court can be seen to coincide with the reclining Vaastu Purusha's central body composed of lung, heart and stomach. Psychically this part of the building offers the heart nexus or feeling centre, the lung or *praana* centre, the stomach or digestive centre, and the *nabhi* or creative centre.

2. THE CENTRAL ENERGY AXIS

The central axis known as the *brahma sutra* runs through every building. When left unbuilt and open on ends, this line brings about great prosperity and well-being to the home. In row-houses particularly, this *brahma sutra* becomes the life line for the block of buildings, the axis for the *praana* to move on. Without it the occupants would find no replenishment of light and air. Psychologically, this axis which is known as *vamsa moolam* or backbone, is considered to be the core of the building and therefore of primary importance in the health of the occupants.

3. THE TOP VENTILATOR OR HOT AIR VENT

Even when it had a courtyard, the traditional building considered slit windows or ventilators necessary at the top of the rooms to keep the hot air moving. Particularly in outside walls, these slits were introduced so that even on hot still afternoons, the natural movement of air created within the rooms of a house was not impeded. Sometimes, this was enhanced, particularly in hot dry areas, with a chute or chimney at a strategic

point with openings at the top to remove the air. It could also have a water body at its base for further cooling. The building is also the standing Purusha with his energy line reaching into space and anchored to the earth. The chimney, the top ventilator, are physical representation of this vertical movement which is also the axis of the *praana.*

4. THE REAR GARDEN

In almost all row-house designs in all parts of the country, the front which looks dull and uninspiring actually hides an extraordinarily vibrant inner space, unique to each family. In the rear is usually located a small garden with space available for animals or weaving and other craft-sheds. This garden is another energy source for each house. In modern flats this would be replaced by a sit-out or terrace with potted plants. The private garden is the building's connection with nature and the relationship of the two offers great energy resources to the occupants.

5. RAINWATER CATCHMENT

In homes which have a vegetable garden or animals at the rear, it is useful to store rainwater. With this end in view, the garden is sloped and at its base is built a brick-lined depression for rainwater to collect in. This is especially beneficial for hot, dry areas, where flat terraces are also used for catchment of rainwater. In Rajasthan this model of rainwater catchment has been perfected over the centuries. The natural slope of land is important, and predetermined ideas of a 'good' slope are of no value here.

### 6. COMBINING WASTE-WATER CHANNELS WITH A VEGETABLE GARDEN

Just as preserving clean water in catchment tanks is an important aspect of design, so is the removal of effluent water without harming the potable water in wells and other tanks. For this purpose simple channels have been made in agricultural villages, along which all water used for cleaning purposes can be taken, which is used again for vegetable patches. Effluent from animal sheds is also taken out in the same way.

### 7. MUD WALLS, LIME WASH, EARTH RED, COW-DUNG, THATCH

In the simple dwelling place which has a vegetable garden and animals at the rear, it is important to follow a cycle of creating, maintaining and replacing. Festivals, holy days and seasons have been systematically demarcated for the application of lime, cow-dung and earth red on the walls or floor as a part of a ritual. Besides marking a special occasion they also help in containing white ants and rodents. There is a significant connection between functionality and auspiciousness. One keeps the other alive.

### 8. MEDICINAL PLANTS AND HERBS

Tulasi and neem planted in the vicinity have a use in the life of the family. Every traditional house recommended the planting of herbs and medicinal plants (or trees) as also flowers for *puja*. These plants with their healing powers and fragrance add positive energies to the environment. The modern need to bring in pretty plants that add nothing to the environment except perhaps colour should be checked before all the

traditional wisdom towards the natural environment is completely lost.

## 9. PERIODIC FUMIGATION OF HOUSE

In most parts of the country, different kinds of incenses, herbs, minerals and plants are used for cleansing the air in a house. The offerings made in a Vedic ritual through *agni* to the gods is one of the basic cleansing actions. *Ghee*, banyan shoots, *darbai* grass, cow-dung cakes, fragrant woods, all combine to create a positive energy and hence remove the negative elements from the environment. Other than this, periodic use of different herbs, neem leaves, *sambrani* incense and firewood smoke help in getting rid of mosquitoes, bacteria, micro-organisms as well as in removing negative feelings and residues. *Mayamatam* speaks of fumigations carried out using the following herbs and minerals.

> *It is the architect who is to offer water to the gods in the interior of the house following which the fumigation should be carried out by him. It is necessary to use tulasi, sarja, arjuna, manjari, vachaka, patola, trapusa, hingu, mahaushadhi, sarshapa, kurava kotra. It bestows grain and wealth, puts to flight the spirits, removes snakes, flies, mosquitoes, mice, spiders, and ants.*
> Mayamatam (Ch. 28, Shloka 17-20)

## 10. ORNAMENTATION IN THE HOUSE WITH THE CRAFT SKILLS OF THE FAMILY AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

The *kolam* or rice-powder design for everyday expression of artistry and aesthetics is also part of this

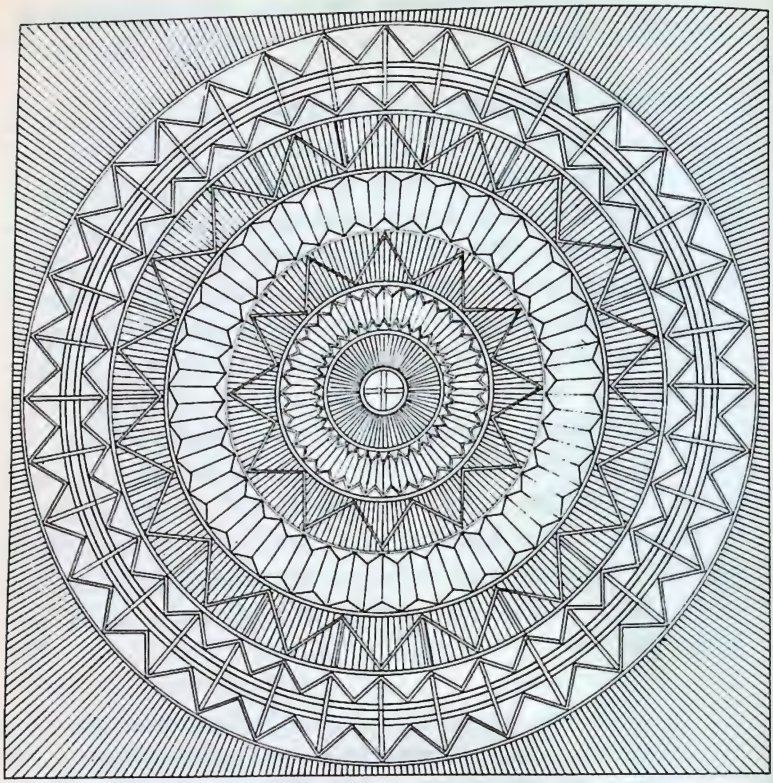


*Fig. 62. Highly intricate design in the roof of a bamboo and thatch hut in a tribal area.*

aesthetic offering. Traditionally, the family was involved in creating the aesthetics of the house with glass pieces, colours, paintings, fabrics, embroidery, woodwork, clay figures, and other materials.

## 11. FESTIVALS AND CEREMONIES—A CONDUIT FOR PRIVACY AND RELATEDNESS

Though privacy is required by every family to give its life meaning and direction, social interaction is just as important for the overall cultural development of people.

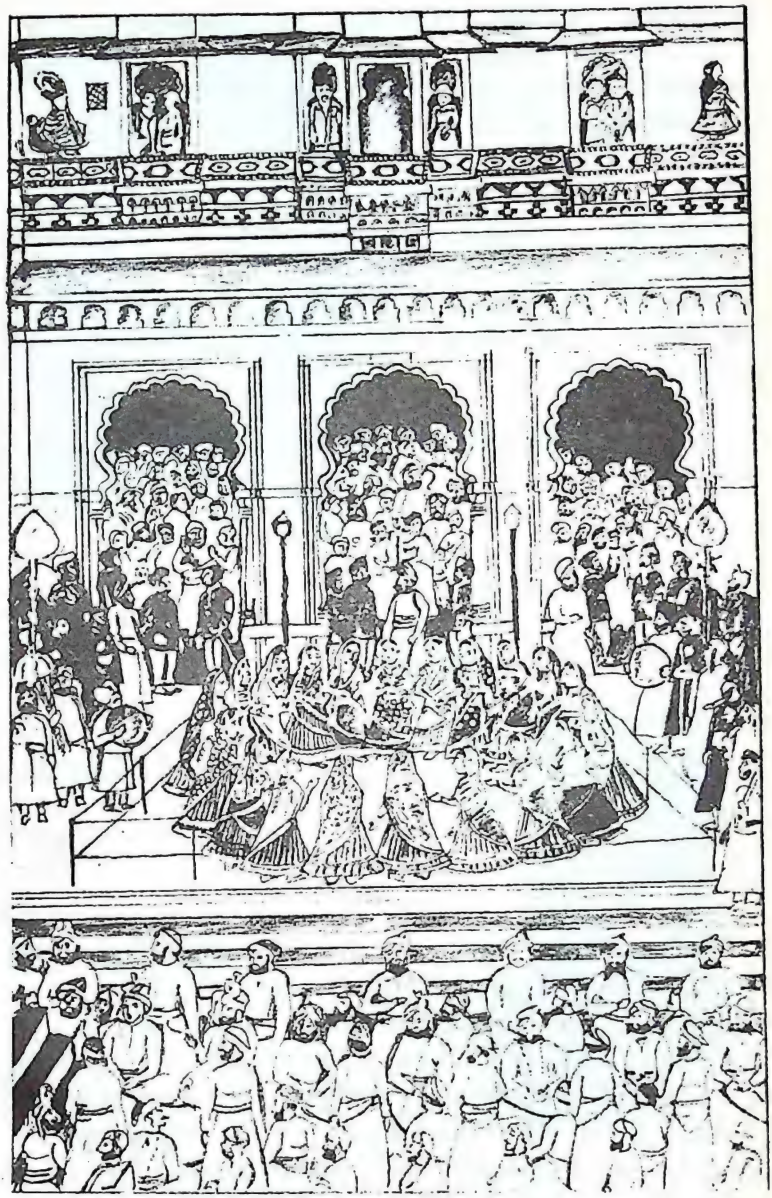


*Fig. 63. A painting depicting a community celebration.*

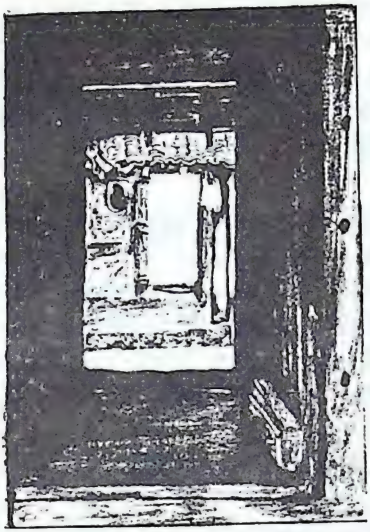
Traditional homes defined this separation and relatedness in multiple ways. In modern life this balance has given way to obsessive privacy. The ill effects of this transition are being felt everywhere. Children do not know how to link with each other or with nature, adults do not have a clue about teamwork, women feel emotionally and spiritually abandoned without the warmth and support systems of a tribal or agricultural community. In rural belts the nature of the collective has helped in enriching the feelings of relatedness and privacy.

## 12. RE-ENERGIZING THE HOUSE FOR CURRENT OCCUPANTS

A common practice in villages or small towns is that even if a house has been with a family for several hundred years, a new door is made after every three generations. *Ayadi* calculations based upon the stars or *nakshatras* of the new family heads are made prior to the construction. This is done in order to renew the energy of the house and make it dynamic and sensitive to the here and now.

## 13. IMPORTANCE OF DOORS

Each of the eight directions and each of the individual locations of the *padam* (modules) of a building has its own significance. Becoming aware of the potential of space is a very important part of the design. The entrance of a house is considered to be one of its most powerful points. It is the threshold which connects the activity-based identity of the individual with his inner self, which is denoted by the private spaces within. It is also deeply connected to the fortunes and tragedies of a family. Traditionally, the door would be scaled and



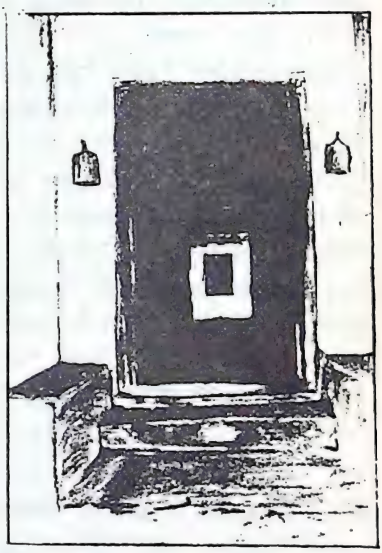


*Fig. 64. ` The dynamics between the door and street in houses of South India.*

designed for each family and would hence be unique. Antique doors can be placed as ornamental objects within the house, but should not be used as the entrance door. The energy patterns of the old door would disturb the psyche of the occupants of a different time and context.

Figure 64 shows simple street houses of south India. Here the movement is from a verandah overlooking the street through endless doorways into the womb of the house which is the courtyard. The journey also symbolizes the movement from heat and dust into quietude and peace.

### 14. VERANDAHS AS BUFFERS AND CONNECTORS

In the lifestyle of the families, the outer verandah not only played the part of the dust and heat collector, but also helped in the social interaction of the family. Even while the private life carried on within the home, the connections of the family with the world outside were transacted without affecting the centre. The verandah or porch in the traditional home was where the casual visitor and the stranger were separated from a member of the house or close friend. The stranger was offered hospitality outside of the home but still protected from the street, while the friend gained access to the private spaces within, which nourished and sustained him/her.

## NEED FOR PREDICTIVE VAASTU AND ITS IMPACT ON THE OCCUPANTS

As mentioned earlier, there is a new trend these days for a vaastu that is predictive. People are demanding greater and greater benefits from a building and the practitioners are promising endless happiness and wealth. In this context, let us look into the basic desires

that people have had over the centuries which today, have only increased.

- Desire for contentment and prosperity. Food in plenty, clothes to wear, a loving family, good children and an anxiety-free future.
- Social acceptance, adequate use of personal talent at work, adequate monetary returns and the capability to leave behind wealth for the children.
- Inspiration to pursue the path toward freedom from the cycle of sorrow. This eternal quest has been sought by each generation to understand the meaning of life and death and the origin of creation.
- Need for social relevance and desire to contribute something of value to the society. The strength of mind and clarity of purpose required to simplify one's personal life so that some effort from the self is offered back to the social and living systems.

At no point in the history of humankind has any society been so engrossed in seeking personal pleasure as it is today. The preoccupation with the self is so high that people have no time to be concerned about the environment, the nature of human existence, or the urge to seek something higher and finer than material satisfaction. Even the simplest tribal, and the most 'unsophisticated' farmer understood that the movement of life contained joys and sorrows, highs and lows, meaningful moments and deep futility, pains and joys. It is only today that we find this uncharacteristic need to endlessly demand 'good things', continuous highs and an utter absence of pain. There are people who ask, 'Can I have more money, more happiness, more love, more of everything?' and there are practitioners who say, 'Open this door and money will pour like rain.' This is a deeply disturbing trend.

In the stories of the Upanishad, and in the lives of the great saints, it is said that the pain and grief their individual spirit endures is compounded since the austerity of their life and their choice of personal sublimation makes it imperative that the person 'live through the pain' without flinching. In some instances, saints have actually requested their dear ones to leave them to their solitary struggles so that they may not be 'tempted to indulge in escapism'. This upliftment of the spirit into finer and more sublime levels can take place only when the spirit learns to endure the highs and the lows with equanimity. In promising an alternative that has no bearing on reality is the practitioner deluding the person, lying outright or is he/she incapable of understanding that every experience has its dark and bright side? Sometimes, even helping the person to take the struggle and the pain with dignity would be a more human promise.

One kind of meditation is upon the attachment with pain, which when cut helps the individual move upward.

> *The severance from union with pain, be it known as yoga. That yoga must be practised with determination and a mind without depression.*
> Bhagavad Gita (Ch.6, v.23)

The second is the awakening to the Brahman within.

> *The Brahman or Divine One inhabits universal space. The individual inhabits his body unconscious of the divinity within his inner space. The space within all sentient beings, all manifested objects is this Divine One. When the individual awakens to this potential, it is*

*said that he/she is illumined.*
Mandukyopanishad (Ch.1, V.16,28)

The third is to remain tranquill and satisfied with the awakened Brahman.

*When a person, satisfied by the self alone, completely casts off all the desires of the mind, then it is said that such a person is a Sthithapragnan (person of steady knowledge).*
Bhagavad Gita (Ch.2, V.55)

How does this affect the nature of the built environment? The occupant and the building should be in harmony. Only then will the joys and sorrows of the family follow their own natural course. A space which is capable of absorbing the vagaries of life without leaving a negative residue is a space filled with warmth and laughter, tears and silences that are natural and therapeutic. Such a space can be designed and built for every individual depending upon their state of mind and personal needs.

Vaastu, which combines the rigour and discipline of design with the traditional perspective toward individual comfort and community linkages, is certainly relevant in a world where isolation has become commonplace. The mystical element which is offered through *ayadi* calculation ties the known with the unknown in a most elegant manner. This too is extremely relevant at the present time.

# 7

# Benefits of Vaastu

This chapter looks into the role of astrology, mandalas and numbers in calculation used by vaastu for recommending proportions. In humans and in buildings, there is an ultimate state which when attained may be said to elevate the individual or building to a divine level.

## CONCEPT OF CHAKRAM, YANTRA

Traditionally, six states of consciousness have been described as energy centres or *chakrams* that guard six

1. Mooladhara chakra
2. Svadhisthana chakra
3. Manipuraka chakra
4. Anahata chakra
5. Visuddhi chakra
6. Aajna chakra
7. Sahasrara chakra
8. Brahmarandhra
9. Ida nadi (left side)
10. Pingala nadi (right side)
11. Susumna nadi (centre)

*Fig. 65. Chakram or subtle energy points in the human body. These points become illuminated through yogic practice.*

types of awareness. When these *chakrams* are opened up and the energy field is activated the potential of the individual reaches its maximum level and is said to be one with the Divine Energy. This unfolding is the receiving of *paramatman* within, and the complete awakening of the *jivatman* to its own energy and power.

Many gateways have been described for this awakening—diligent practice or *sadhana*, yoga, *dhyana*, bhakti, initiation from a teacher, music and dance. The form of a yantra when used for meditation can also lead to this transformation.

A building too, in its sacred proportions and its form, can evoke such an effect. But such power-based proportions are recommended only for temples and ashrams and not for the residences of *grihastha* (householders).

For most yantras and for purposes of chanting, for proportions and layouts of buildings and towns, certain mystic numbers have been used often—0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and combinations of these numbers.

- One is the ultimate reality, known as *paramatman*, *shivam*, *ishwara*, *mahapurusha*, *Brahma*.
- Two is the original diad called *shivam/shakti*, *purusha/prakriti*, *paramatman/jivatman*.
- Three is the triad of Shiva, Vishnu, Brahma, three *gunas*, the three worlds of *bhooloka*, *devaloka* and *yamaloka*.
- Four is the four faces of the lord—the four directions.
- Five is *panchabhoota*, *panchakosha*, five types of lingam, five types of land.
- Six is *shadritu* or six seasons, six *chakrams*.
- Seven is *sapta kanya*, seven days of the week, seven notes in music.
- Eight is *ashta dik* or eight directions, eight

*avadhanam* or skills, eight *siddhis* or powers.

- Nine is *navarasa*, nine *nakshatras* to a cycle, *navadanya* nine grains.
- Ten signifies the ten *avatara* of Vishnu, directions including *devaloka*, *patalam*.

The Kalachakra Mandala has several forms, numerical values, mantras, colours and mathematical principles which forms the basis of the aesthetics in the drawing as well as the mystical meanings attached to it. The spiritual powers that may be derived through these mandalas have been incorporated in all the religious practices of this country. Numbers have played a very important role in mystical practices.

Each of the numbers has certain meanings and significances that are deeply internalized in the Indian traditions. Psychic and spiritual changes are usually connected with some of these mystic numbers. According to astrology some numbers are considered more apt for certain *nakshatras* or moon signs of people than others. They are auspicious for the person and invariably used for various important moments in the person's life.

In vaastu also, such numbers are chosen for offering a conducive vibration to the person through linear or spatial application. There are two ways in which this choosing of suitable numbers can be done. One is a fixed set of measures that has been set out in the thumb-rule book of the practitioners which starts with numeral 17 and ends with numeral 1079. The measure has been set out in the traditional system of *muzham* (*hasta*) and *angula*. The other way is to choose the number after carrying out the *ayadi* formula. There are six types of tests that are carried out (sometimes eleven also) and hence the system is called *shadayadi or ekadasa ayadi*.

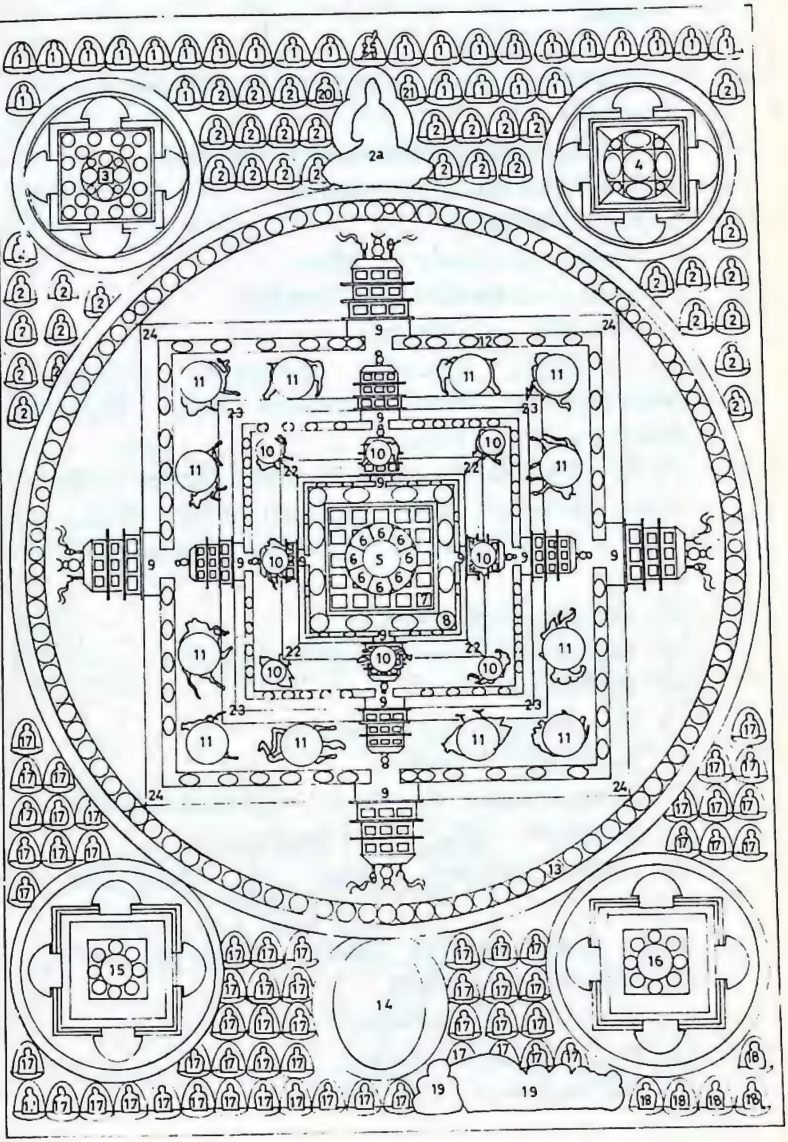


*Fig. 66. Chart of the figures represented in a Kalachakra Mandala.*

1. Kings of Shambala
2. Lamas who have upheld the *Kaalachakra* lineage
2a. Tsong Khapa
3. Thirty-two deity *Manjuvajra Guhyasamaja Mandala*
4. Thirteen deity *Yamantaka Mandala*
5. *Kaalachakra* father-mother
6. Eight *shaktis*
7. Male and female buddhas
8. Male and female bodhisattvas
9. Guardian protectors
10. Eighty Speech *Mandala* deities (seventy-two female deities and eight father-mother deities)
11. Twelve animals carrying thirty deities each symbolizing the three hundred deities of the days of the year, according to the *Kaalachakra* system
12. Offering goddesses
13. Eighty-eight charnel ground deities
14. *Vajravega*
15. *Red Raktayamari Mandala*
16. *Vajrapani Mandala*
17. Various deities associated with *Kaalachakra*
18. Standard Geluk order protectors
19. Desi Sangyey Gyatso and Mongolian patrons
20-21. Father-mother figure associated with *Kaalachakra* teachings
22. Mind *Mandala* Palace
24. Body *Mandala* Palace
25. *Kaalachakra* father-mother

## NAKSHATRA

The *nakshatras* are divided into three series of nine each and the benefits of each of these are given as follows. *Nakshatras* 1–9 form the first series; 10–18 the second series and 19–27 the last series. Each of these series or units is called a *paryayam* (group). The numbers 10 and 19 are taken as 1, the numbers 11 and 20 as 2 and so on, so that there are only 1 to 9 numbers.

### Table of Calculations

| | |
|---|---|
| Dinam | N X 8/27 remainder to be checked against table no.1 |
| Aayam | N X 8/12 remainder to be checked against table no.2 |
| Vyaya | N X 9/10 remainder to be checked against table no.3 |
| Yoni | N X 3/8 remainder to be checked against table no.4 |
| Amsha | N X 4/9 remainder to be checked against table no.5 |
| Vaaram | N X 9/7 remainder to be checked against table no.6 |

There are six types of effects for the *ayadi* calculation, namely:

- *Aayam* is income or benefits.
- *Vyaya* is expenses or loss.
- *Yoni* is the direction.
- *Dinam* refers to the stars or the zodiac belt of constellations.
- *Vaaram* is the days of the week.
- *Amsha* is the classification of characteristics.

Table 1

| PARYAYAM | | | BENEFITS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Ashwini | 10. Magha | 19. Moolam | Janmam: Beginning, birth | Good |
| 2. Bharani | 11. Purvaphalguni | 20. Purvashada | Sampatti: Prosperity | Good |
| 3. Krithika | 12. Utraphalguni | 21. Utraashaada | Vipatti Danger | Not good |
| 4. Rohini | 13. Hasta | 22. Sravana | Kshemam: Contentment | Good |
| 5. Mrigshirsha | 14. Chitra | 23. Dhanishta | Pratiharanam: repelling | Not good |
| 6. Aardra | 15. Swaathi | 24. Shatataraka | Saadhakam: Achievement | Good |
| 7. Punarvasu | 16. Vishaka | 25. Purvabhadra-pada | Vadha: Death | Not good |
| 8. Pushya | 17. Anuradha | 26. Utrabhadra-pada | Maitram: Friendship | Good |
| 9. Aaslesha | 18. Jyeshta | 27. Revati | Paramamaitram: Spiritual health | Good |

*Aayam* is of twelve types.

Table 2

| AAYAM | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | Yogam | unexpected benefits |
| 02 | Bhoga | pleasure |
| 03 | Sampraapti | renown |
| 04 | Veeryam | heroism |
| 05 | Dhaanyam | agricultural wealth |
| 06 | Dhanam | prosperity |
| 07 | Sukham | happiness, spiritual tranquillity |
| 08 | Dharma | principles, value |
| 09 | Gnaanam | wisdom |
| 10 | Yogam | meditation or communication with the self |
| 11 | Siddhi | accomplishment |
| 12 | Artha | substance |

There are ten types of *Vyaya* or expenses.

Table 3

| VYAYA | | |
|---|---|---|
| 01 | Bhukti | pleasure, enjoyment |
| 02 | Mukti | release (from sadness) |
| 03 | Shubham | auspiciousness |
| 04 | Samvriddhi | growth or prosperity |
| 05 | Sampatti | wealth |
| 06 | Dhanam | monetary benefits |
| 07 | Mahima | greatness |
| 08 | Naashaka | destruction |
| 09 | Kalaham | riot |
| 10 | Sneha | intimacy or love |

There are eight types of *Yoni* (directions). The texts call the directions *grihabandham* (the binding force of the buildings), *digdevata* (directional deities) and *praana* (life force)

Table 4

| YONI | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Dhwajam | flag | east | Indra |
| 2. | Dhoomam | smoke | south-east | Agni |
| 3. | Simha | lion | south | Yama |
| 4. | Shvanam | dog | south-west | Niruti |
| 5. | Vrishabham | bull | west | Varuna |
| 6. | Khara | donkey | north-west | Vayu |
| 7. | Gaja | elephant | north | Kubera |
| 8. | Kaaka | crow | north-east | Isaana |

There are nine types of *Amsha.*

Table 5

| AMSHA | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Taskaran | thief | Not good |
| 2. | Bhukti | pleasure, enjoyment | Good |
| 3. | Shakti | ability for action | Good |
| 4. | Dhanya | wealthy man | Good |
| 5. | Nrupa | king | Good |
| 6. | Kliba | eunuch | Not good |
| 7. | Nirbhiti | fearless | Good |
| 8. | Daridra | wretched, poor | Not good |
| 9. | Preshya | assistant | Good |

There are seven days of the week (*Vaaram*).

Table 6

| VAARAM | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Ravi | Sunday | Not good |
| 2. | Soma | Monday | Good |
| 3. | Mangala | Tuesday | Not good |
| 4. | Budha | Wednesday | Good |
| 5. | Guru | Thursday | Good |
| 6. | Shukra | Friday | Good |
| 7. | Shani | Saturday | Not good |

## Work Sheet

Sample calculations for specific individuals:

The chosen dimension, say x is calculated for benefits. If the calculations work out positively, then this number x is taken to be the correct *ayadi* number. If not, other numbers have to be assumed, to which calculations are

to be carried out. *Ayadi poruttam* can be calculated for the perimeter dimensions or the width. In the calculation the remainder is the number against which all benefits are matched. The integer is not considered. Wherever the remainder is zero, the value of nine is substituted.

All the foot and inch measurements should be converted to the traditional *hasta* and *angula* measures. The conversion table is as follows :

1 hasta = 2'9" or 11/4
1 angula = 1⅜" or 1⅛
(To note here—1 hasta = 24 angula)
2'9" (FPS) = 1 hasta
1'0" = 1/2'9" or 4/11"
33" (FPS) = 24 angula
1" = 24/33 or 8/11

AYADI CALCULATIONS FOR SIX TYPES OF BENEFITS

Let us take two examples to illustrate the applications of *ayadi*:

Example 1:

House owners: Man of 55 years, *nakshatram–Moolam* (no.19 which is considered 9+1=1 in the third *paryayam*)

Woman of 50 years, *nakshatram–Rohini* (no.4 in the first *paryayam*)

The outer perimeter of the building in consideration is 214'6", the inner perimeter (without wall thickness) is 209'0". Either of these measurements can be chosen for the calculation. This should be converted to the traditional measures of *hasta* and *angula*.

209'0" = 209 x 4/11 ; which in turn is 19 x 4 or 76 hasta (1824 *angula*)

1824 x 8/27 = 4864/9 = 5404/9 (remainder 4)

This resultant number should be checked against the *nakshatram* of the owners.

The remainder obtained from the first formula is 4. This number is called *Ayadi Nakshatram*. To make the first check for the chosen number, the differences between the owners' number and *ayadi* number should be calculated which includes both the first and last numbers.

Counting from 1 (the number of the man) to 4 (the number obtained from the above calculation), including both 1 and 4, the resultant number is 4.

In the same way, counting from 4 (the woman's number) to 4 (the number obtained above) the resultant number is one.

The benefits (check Table 1) of 4 is *kshemam* or contentment.

The benefit of one is *janmam* or birth and beginning.

This number is suitable to both house owners and is hence considered to be auspicious. Now let us carry out all the calculations for benefits.

1) Dinam—1824 x 8/27 has a remainder of 4.

The *ayadi* number of 1824 is good.

2) Yoni—1824 x 3/8 = 684, remainder is 0 (zero is substituted with nine).

Nine would stand for 1 or east (the eight directions in each cycle)*

This means, the eastern direction for the entrance would be most suitable for this building. Other directions of west, north or south can also be employed if east

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* Wherever the remainder is 0, the value of 9 is substituted.

1. If Yoni is S (*Simha*) then only E is suitable (W and N are not)
2. If Yoni is W (*Vrishabham*) only E & N are suitable S is not
3. If Yoni is N (*Gaja*) then E and W are suitable not S.
4. If Yoni is E (*Dhwajam*)then all direction are suitable.

is not practical. The eastern symbol *Dhwajam* is suitable for all.

Wherever the remainder is 0, the value of 9 is substituted.

3) Aayam—1824 x 8/12 = 1216, remainder 0 (assume 9).

Aayam may be taken as 9.

4) Vyaya—1824 x 9/10 = 1641 6/10, remainder 6.

The ratio of income to expense is 9:6. This is good.

5) Amsha 1824 x 4/9 = 243 2/3 = 810 2/3, remainder 2 (*bhukti*). This is good.

6) Vaaram—1824 x 9/7 = 1641 6/7 = 2345 1/7, remainder 1

This is not a positive match.

In this calculation, five out of six numbers are positively matched. At this point it is necessary to carry out the calculations for several other numbers that are close to the chosen perimeter so that the corrections if any would be marginal to the final measurement of building (214'0", 214'6", 214'9", 214'3" and so on).

Now let us take another number and test for positive benefits.

The new perimeter may be taken as 214'6".

This is converted to *hasta* or *angula*: 214'6" = 78 hasta or 1872 angula.

1872 x 8/27 = 166 4/3 = 554 2/3, remainder 2 (*nakshatram bharani*)

1 to 2 = 2 or *sampathi*, prosperity

4 to 2 = 8 or *maitram*, friendship.

The benefit for one person is prosperity and other friendship. The number would be suitable for the owners and may be considered auspicious.

Now let us carry out all the calculations.

1) Dinam—1872 x 8/27 has a remainder of 2.

2) Yoni—1872 x 3/8 = 702, remainder 0. (0 is substituted with nine)

Nine would stand for 1 or east (eight directions in each cycle)

This means, eastern direction for entrance would be most suitable for this building. Other directions of west, north or south can also be employed if east is not practical.

3) Aayam—1872 x 8/12 = 1248, remainder 0 (assume 9).

Aayam may be taken as 9.

4) Vyaya—1872 x 9/10 = 1684 8/10 remainder 8.

The ratio of income to expense is 9:8.

5) Amsha—1872 x 4/9 = 243 2/3 = 936, remainder zero assume 9 (*preshya*). This is good.

6) Vaaram—1872 x 9/7 = 1684 8/7 = 2406 6/7, remainder 6.

Six is Friday which is a positive match.

Since all six calculations are positive, this measurement of 1872 angula or 214'6" may be taken as the beneficial measurement for the house. As already stated, if the actual outer and inner measurements are not beneficial then several measurements close to these lengths must be tested so that the most beneficial linear measure may be obtained. In case the calculations are being made for existing buildings then it is possible to arrive at a beneficial measure which would require a slight addition to outer perimeter or reduction to inner perimeter.

Example 2:

House owners: Man of 40 years, *nakshatram-Mrigshirsha* (no.5 in table 1); Woman of 40 years, *nakshatram-Purvabadrapada* (no.25 or 7 in the third *prayayam* of Table 1)

The perimeter of the design for the building is 181'6". This should be converted to the traditional measures of *hasta* and *angula.*

181'6" x 4/11; = 66 hastam (1584 angula)

1584 x 8/27 = 140 8/3 = 469 1/3 (remainder 1)

This resultant number should be checked against the *nakshatram* of the owners.

Counting from 5 (the number of the man) to 1 (the number obtained from the above calculation), including both five and one, the resultant number is 6—*saadhakam* or achievement.

In the same way, counting from 7 (the woman's number) to 1 (the number obtained above) the resultant number is 4—*kshemam* or contentment.

This number is suitable to both house owners and is hence considered to be auspicious.

This is an auspicious match and can thus be taken as the *ayadi* number. Now let us carry out all the calculations for benefits.

1) Dinam—1584 x 8/27 has a remainder of 1.

The *ayadi* number of 1584 is good.

2) Yoni—1584 x 3/8 = 594, remainder 0. (0 is substituted with nine).

Nine would stand for one or east (eight directions in each cycle).

This means, eastern direction for entrance would be most suitable for this building. Other directions of west, north or south can also be employed if east is not practical.

3) Aayam—1584 x 8/12 = 1056, remainder 0 (assume 9).

Aayam may be taken as 9.

4) Vyaya—1584 x 9/10 = 1425 6/10 remainder 6.

The ratio of income to expense is 9:6. This is good.

5) Amsha—1584 x 4/9 = 704, remainder 0 (*preshya*). This is good.

6) Vaaram—1584 x 9/7 = 1425 6/7 = 2036 4/7, remainder 4. This is *budha*, a positive match.

In this, all six calculations are beneficial. Thus this number of 181'6" may be adopted for the building.

Note : In a nutshell it is possible to work out *Ayadi Poruttam* for the following:

1. Outer perimeter of a building.
2. Inner perimeter of a building.
3. Width of a building.
4. Basic module width of a building.

It is also possible to calculate for all measurements in certain special applications. In my experience I have found that the modular measure calculated against benefits works out most effectively since all multiples of this number would automatically be beneficial. Doorways, table sizes, cupboards, and other items can also be calculated for benefits. The room of the head of the organization, the entrance doorway of houses, the tables of powerful change-agents in organizations can be calculated for benefits.

In the choice of modular grid also there are certain number of modules that are considered more auspicious—49, 64, 81, 100. Out of these the odd number modules and even number modules are once again separated into two parts, *yugma* and *ayugma*. The even numbers mandala or *yugma* is used for layout of towns villages and cities, Shiva temples, ashrams, educational buildings. The odd type or *ayugma* is used for towns and villages, Vaishnav and other temples, residences, public buildings.

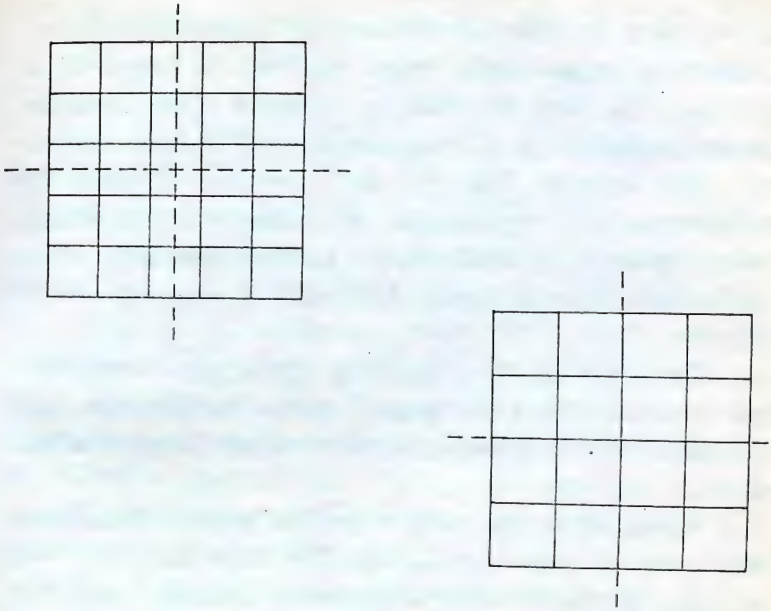

*Fig. 67. Modules 5x5 (25) and 4x4 (16). The first is with odd number of modules and the second with even number of modules.*

In figure 67, in the even number modular grid, the centre is a point which has no characteristics (*nirguna* or *nishkala*) and no dimensions. In the odd number modular grid, the centre is a space of one module (*saguna, sakala*) with characteristics and form. The first type which is of reduced energy is suitable for residences and commercial houses and the second is considered suitable for very high energy layouts such as temples and ashrams. Lord Shiva who is seen as the embodiment of *Nirguna* and *Nishkala Tattva* (philosophy of amorphous energy) may be housed in the *yugma* layout.

The employment of numbers in the tradition has had very important ritual meanings. In the proportion of herbal extracts, alloys, medicines, choice of flowers

for worship, number of invitees for a special function, number of items in a meal, number of steps in a staircase, number of dots in a *kolam* (rice powder design), syllables in a song, spaces in a rhythm, and so on, the number has to be carefully chosen. In architecture the employment of numbers as auspicious linear measure as well as the hidden vibrations in a visible form is very highly developed in all parts of the country.

The division of a building (particularly temples) into consonant rhythmic parts both in the elevation and the plan is a breathtaking method which offers endless pleasure and joy.

Figure 68 is one of the earliest temple complexes with many shrines surrounding the main sanctum. The complex has been worked out on a modular basis, but since the temple was carved out of a rock face the lines are not always perfect.

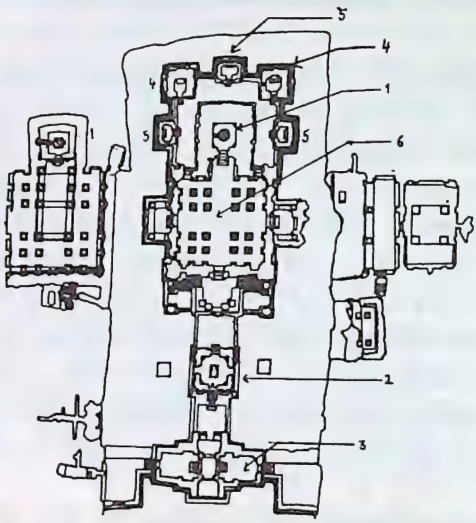


*Fig. 68. Temple plan of Kailashanatha temple at Ellora.*

The sanctum may be called module no. 1.

Sanctum 2 which is 1 1/2 times bigger than 1.

Sanctum 4 is equal to 2.

Sanctum 5 has the same width as 2 but only half the depth.

Mandapam 6 is 3 1/2 times 1.

Figure 69 shows the module of the *garbhagriha* taken into the entire structure of the temple, including the architectural embellishments. The width of the sanctum 'a' is divided into eight parts which forms the basic component in the structure. The reduction of the *vimanam* or tower is rhythmic which gives the structure its definitive personality.

In the sculpture too in figure 70, the rhythms and proportions are employed in a remarkably sensitive manner. The basic module here is the length of the face. The body of Buddha is composed of nine face lengths. The form of Buddha is described within the proportionate grid. Projections and depressions are also rhythmic and modular in nature.

Vaastu does not make any promises of a utopia which holds no pain or loss or failure. What can be offered is a series of manifest spaces that can provide solace and comfort in times of trouble, well-being in times of distress, contentment amidst pain. In other words, even the most trouble-filled times contain within them spaces of stillness and quiet which can be touched when the organism stops fighting the obstacle. Vaastu essentially offers this pause.

In yoga the disturbance within the person is dealt with by helping the individual achieve a balance and equilibrium within. There is no promise that sickness or sadness will never visit the person, but it ensures

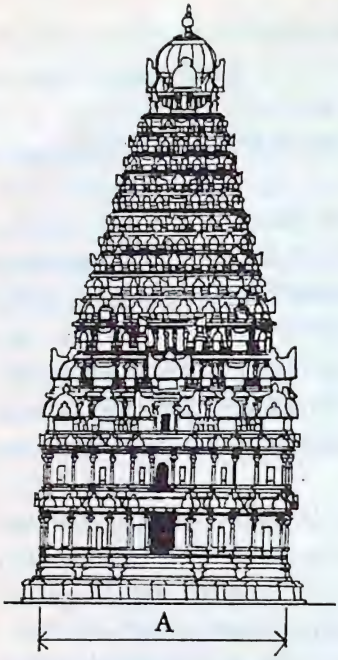


*Fig. 69. Brihadeeswara temple elevation which shows the rhythmic modular growth of the building.*


*Fig. 70. Buddha image composed within a modular grid.*

that when the individual has attained a rhythm within, the *chakrams* (subtle energy levels) become ordered and disciplined in an equable and comfortable distance from each other. Once this rhythm and order is achieved, the person learns to deal with sorrow with grace. Vaastu, in the built form, is the way to achieve a rhythmic inner space which would give the necessary strength for acting in the world outside despite the pain and the sorrow within.

Each of the benefits offered in *ayadi* is a kind of gateway or threshold for the occupant. By offering a particular threshold the person can connect through a particular conduit with the world outside and the self.

For example:

1. *Saadhakam*: This choice would be ideal for one who chooses active engagement as a life stance as this benefit is the space for achievement.

2. *Kshemam*: This is for those who hold contentment as the basis of their being and acting.

3. *Janmam*: Ideal for those who choose to be born again and again newly into every moment.

4. *Maitram*: For friendship and relatedness.

5. *Paramamaitram*: For relatedness with the environment and a close connection with the Divine

6. *Sampatti*: For prosperity and fulfilment.

A building designed with the principles of vaastu and numerical calculations of *ayadi* affects the individual occupants in three ways—physical, psychological/emotional, and spiritual.

Physical: Provides comfort, ease of use, convenience, which is achieved by paying attention to space, light, ventilation, good circulation, comforts, colour, form.

Psychological: Creates well-being, unlocks the tensions, enhances relationships inwardly and outwardly. This is achieved by following *pada vinyaasa,*

*marmasthana* and cosmology.

Spiritual: Awakens the urge for understanding the meaning of life and death and evokes the quest for touching something finer and more profound within and without. This is achieved by understanding and working out *ayadi* proportions and comprehending the role of the Vaastu Purusha Mandala.

By ensuring that all three aspects of a person's life are touched, evoked, activated and harmonized, the entire universe of the spirit is opened out and made aware. This complete or holistic action is the strength of vaastu.

# Conclusion

The subject matter of vaastu, comprising both the theoretical aspect as well as field application, is an ocean which I have attempted to cross in my frail craft. There is so much more that has to be understood, and so many applications that need to be tested out. In my lifetime I see only one small area of this vast ocean being charted and gaining relevance for contemporary use. This book is only a preliminary offering in which I have attempted to give a broader and more comprehensive view to the building tradition by placing it against the backdrop of the Vedanta and the spiritual quest of our forefathers. Perhaps many others may be inspired to walk further in this path and leave footprints behind for generations to come.

## THE QUINTESSENCE

To be a designer, the tradition has insisted that knowledge and skill in the particular subject must go hand in hand with a deep understanding of life, knowledge of sister traditions such as music, dance and painting, a love for nature, understanding of geology and geography, comprehension of mathematics, awareness of philosophies and religious beliefs as well as a fundamental commitment to the integrity of action and honesty of purpose.

The glimpse into the world of vaastu is therefore

addressed to the serious students of 'value architecture' and for those inquisitive individuals who have been walking the path of truth to understand the nature of human collectivity and individual excellence. Let vaastu also be a *sadhana* towards the bringing together, integration and sublimation of the human lot. Let this book be an offering and a hope.

# Glossary

Aajna chakra: Sixth level of the subtle levels of the body located at the level of the forehead.

Aardra: The sixth star in the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Mithuna or Gemini.

Aaryaka: One of the gods of the land located in the eastern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Aasana padam: Diagram with hundred modules.

Aaslesha: Ninth star in the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Kataka or Cancer.

Aayam: Income.

Adbhuta: Wonderful, Marvellous.

Aditi: One of the gods of the land located in the NE sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Aditya: One of the gods of the land located in the eastern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala. Another name for Surya or the Sun.

Advaitam: A school of philosophy which states that the Divine energy resides within every individual.

Agni: Lord of fire.

Aitareyopanishad: One of the 108 Upanishads which is part of the Vedas or theological texts of Hinduism.

Akasham: Sky.

Amsha: Division, part.

Anahata chakra: Fourth level of the subtle levels of the body located at the level of the heart.

Angula: Traditional Indian measure equal to a finger's breadth or the width of eight barley corns.

Antariksha: One of the gods of the land located in the SE sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Anubhava: Direct perception or cognition, experience.

Anuradha: The seventeenth star in the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Vrichika or Scorpio.

Apa: One of the gods of the land located in the NE sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Apavatsa: One of the gods of the land located in the NE sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Ardhanareeshwara: The form of the Lord embodying both male and female principles. It also means desire.

Arjuna: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Artha: Purpose, meaning.

Ashram: Hermitage.

Ashta Dik: The eight directions.

Ashtavakra Gita: A philosophical text.

Ashwini: The first star in the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Mesha or Aries.

Asura: One of the gods of the land located in the western sector of the vaastu purusha mandala. It also means an evil spirit or demon.

Atman: The individual soul.

Avadhaanam: Attentiveness, care, devotion. Ashtha Avadhanam is a skill developed by some people to pay attention to eight types of stimulii and recall each one with exactitude.

Avarana: Enclosure, defence, surrounding wall.

Avatara: Manifestation, incarnation.

Avatara purusha: Human form of the incarnation.

Avidya: Spiritual ignorance, illusion.

Ayadi: Benefits.

Ayadi poruttam : Beneficial calculations. Part of the traditional vaastu techniques adopted by the designer communities of Viswakarma.

Ayugma: Odd numbers.

Ayurveda: Ancient system of Indian medicine.

Bhagavad Gita: A very important theological text in Hinduism.

Bhakta: Devotee.

Bhakti: Devotion.

Bhakti marga: Path of devotion.

Bhallata: One of the gods of the land located in the northern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Bharani: The second star in the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Mesha or Aries.

Bhoga: Enjoyment, pleasure, food, wealth.

Bhogadyam: Functional, utilitarian.

Bhoodhara: One of the gods of the land located in the northern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Bhooloka: Terrestrial globe.

Bhoomi: Earth.

Bhoomi puja: Ritual to propitiate the earthly energies before building activity may be started.

Bhoomi Purusha: The energy of the earth perceived as a living organism.

Bhoomi vaastu: Earthly space or site for building.

Bhootal: An element. It usually refers to the five elements of fire, earth, air, water and space.

Bhringaraja: One of the gods of the land located in the southern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Bhrisa: One of the gods of the land located in the eastern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Bhukti: Enjoyment, possession.

Bindu: A small particle point.

Brahma: One of the trinity of the Hindu pantheon. He is considered the creator of all living forms and all universal phenomena.

Brahman: The Supreme Being.

Brahmananda: Bliss or rapture of absorption into Brahman.

Brahma pada: The passage or space in the centre of a site.

Brahmarandhra: Luminous axis running between the skull and mooladhara chakra.

Brahmasthana: The central point in the site or plot.

Brahma sutra: The central axis running through any site from East to West.

Brahmins: One of the four castes in the Indian social system.

Budha: The planet Mercury.

Chakram: A wheel.

Champaka: A type of flower.

Charaki: One of the gods of the land located in the NE corner outside of the site of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Chatur: The number four.

Chaturmukham: Four faces, a building which has four faces.

Chatursala: A building with four wings around a courtyard.

Chikitsa: Medical treatment, therapeutics, healing.

Chikitsa vaastu: A built space capable of healing or curing the inhabitants.

Chitra: The fourteenth star in the zodiac belt which appears under the sign of Kanya or Virgo.

Damaru: Drum.

Dandakam: Staff, refers to a rectangular shaped building.

Dandakasala: Rectangular building unit.

Daridra: Poor, indigent.

Dasharatha: Father of Lord Rama, in the epic Ramayana.

Dauvarika: One of the gods of the land located in the SW corner of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Deivika padam: The passage or space around the central module of the plot.

Deva: Celestial or luminous being, god.

Devalaya: Residence of the gods.

Devaloka: Heaven, paradise.

Devi panchastavi: A theological text describing the primal goddess.

Dhaanyam: Grain, corn, wealth in grains.

Dhanam: Property, wealth.

Dhanishta: The twenty-third star in the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Makara or Capricorn.

Dhanur: Zodiac sign of Sagittarius.

Dhanya: Bestowing wealth.

Dharma: Religion, law, ethics, justice, righteousness.

Dhoomam: Smoke, vapour.

Dhwajam: Flag staff.

Dhyana: Meditation, reflection, contemplation.

Dig devata or Dig pala: Guardians of the quarters.

Dinam: Day.

Dvaitam: Philosophy of duality which maintains that the individual and the Supreme soul are separate.

Dwaram: A door, gateway.

Dwi: Two.

Dwisala: Two wings of a building.

Ekadasa ayadi: Ayadi or beneficial calculation with eleven types of calculation.

Ekasala: One wing house.

Gaja: Elephant.

Gandharva: One of the gods of the land located in the southern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Garbha: Womb.

Garbhagriha: Sanctum sanctorum of a temple.

Garbhanyasa: Ritual carried out to energize a building.

Ghanam: Solid, hard, type of proportion.

Ghee: Melted butter.

Gnanam: Knowledge; knowledge derived from meditation.

Grihabandham: A tie or bond in a house; that which creates harmony.

Grihakshata: One of the gods of the land located in the southern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Griha pravesam: A solemn, first entry into a building which is celebrated with a ritual.

Grihastha: A householder, one who has entered that stage in life which requires setting up of an independent home.

Guna: A quality, virtue, merit, characteristics.

Guru: A teacher, preceptor, the planet Jupiter.

Harikatha: Discourse, musical narration of the great epics.

Hasta: A standard linear measure in the traditional scale, also called muzham.

Hingu: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Ida nadi: The energy line on the left within the subtle body.

Indrajaya: One of the gods of the land located in the SW part of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Indriya: Power of the senses.

Isaana: One of the gods of the land located in the NE part of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Iswara: Epithet of Lord Shiva.

Janmam: Birth.

Janma nakshatram: Birth star generally known as moon sign in Western astrology.

Jayadam: A type of proportion.

Jayanta: One of the gods of the land located in the NE sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Jivatman: Individual spirit.

Jyeshta: The eighteenth star of the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Vrichika or Scorpio.

Jyotisha: The ancient science of astronomy and astrology.

Kaaka: Crow.

Kaala: Time

Kaavi: A Tamil word denoting earth-red.

Kalaa: Skill, ingenuity, art.

Kalachakra mandala: A two dimensional chart representing the movement of time.

Kalaham: Strife, quarrel.

Kalasam: A pitcher or pot, pinnacle on the temple structure.

Kali: An epithet of Durga, one of the goddesses of the Hindu pantheon.

Kamandalam: Water holder.

Kanda harmyam or Karna harmyam: A structure with dome and finial in the shape of a single floor temple, which is generally placed at the corners of all buildings.

Kanya: Virgin, maiden.

Karman: Action, work, duty, religious rite, fate.

Karma bandhanam: The actions performed in one life which lead to a certain attachment or binding to a course or choice in the next life.

Kataka: Zodiac sign of Cancer.

Khara: A mule.

Kliba: Impotent, a eunuch.

Kolam: Tamil word for art work made with rice powder to decorate the entrances of houses and for places of worship.

Kotra: One of the herbs used in the fumigation of a built space.

Krishna: One of the Divine manifestations of Lord Vishnu.

Krithika: The third star in the zodiac belt which appears in the sign of Mesham or Aries.

Kshemam: Happiness, ease, comfort, safety, security, protection.

Kubera: One of the gods of the land located in the northern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Kumbha: A pot, the pot-shaped finial on top of a temple.

Kumbhabhishekham: A ceremony in which the temple structure is consecrated with the pouring of holy water on the finial.

Kundalini shakti: Spiritual energy activated through the practice of a kind of yoga which moves through the subtle levels of the body and finally transforms itself into luminosity at the top of the head.

Kundika: Water holder.

Kurava: One of the herbs used in the fumigation of a built space.

Lingam: An emblem, a symbol, a characteristic, an image representing Lord Shiva.

Madhya sutram: Central axis which runs through the horizontal and vertical planes of any form.

Magha: The tenth star in the zodiac which appears under the sign of Simha or Leo.

Mahameru (Meru): The mythical mountain around which the planets are said to revolve. It is represented in a symbolic form for prayers.

Mahapitha padam: Diagram with sixteen modules.

Mahapurusha: The Supreme spirit. An epithet of Vishnu.

Mahaushadhi: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Mahiman: Greatness.

Maitram: Friendship.

Makara: Zodiac sign of Capricorn.

Mandala or Mandalam: Wheel, ring, mystical diagram used for invocation and prayer, path of a heavenly body.

Mandapa: An open hall, pavillion.

Manduka padam: A diagram with sixty-four modules.

Mandukyopanishad: One of the 108 Upanishads which is part of the Vedas or theological texts of Hinduism.

Mangala or Mangalam: Auspicious, fortunate, blessed.

Manipuraka chakra: Third of the subtle levels of the body located at the level of navel.

Manjari: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Mantra: Vedic hymn, sacred prayer, spell, incantation.

Manusha: Human.

Manusha padam: Third passage or space around the centre of a plot.

Manushyalaya: Residential space for human beings.

Marmasthana: Sensitive, weak, vulnerable or vital part.

Maulikam: A building shaped like a trough.

Mayamatam: One of the well-known treatises on architecture and sculpture.

Mesha: Zodiac sign of Aries.

Mina: Zodiac sign of Pisces.

Mithuna: Zodiac sign of Gemini.

Mitra: One of the gods of the land, located in the western sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Mooladhara chakra: The first of the subtle levels of the body, located near the genital organ.

Moolam: The nineteenth star in the zodiac, which appears under the sign of Dhanur or Sagittarius.

Mrigshirsha: The fifth star in the zodiac, which appears under the sign of Mithuna or Gemini.

Mrisha: One of the gods of the land located in the SW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Mruga: One of the gods of the land located in the northern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Mukhya: One of the gods of the land located in the northern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Mukti: Liberation, release of the soul from its many births.

Mundakopanishad: One of the 108 Upanishads which is part of the Vedas or theological texts of Hinduism.

Muzham: Basic linear measure in the traditional scale, also known as hasta.

Naashaka: Destructive.

Nabhi: The navel.

Naga: One of the gods of the land located in the NW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Nakshatra: Star.

Nandyavarta: A spiral shape of a building.

Narada: One of the divine sages represented as a celestial messenger.

Natya: Dance.

Nirbhiti: Without fear.

Nirguna: Without properties.

Niruti: One of the gods of the land located in the SW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Nishkala: Undivided, whole, without specific form.

Nrupa: King.

Paaparakshasi: One of the gods of the land, located in the NW corner of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Paashanda: A heretic or non believer.

Parijaata: A flower which has white petals and red stalk and a powerful fragrance which is used for worship.

Padam: Module, one part of a grid.

Pada vinyasa: Modular grid.

Paisaacha Padam: Fourth or final space around the centre of the plot.

Panchabhoota: Five elements namely fire, earth, air, water and space.

Pancha kosha: Five levels of consciousness, namely annamaya or physical body, pranamaya or vital sheath, manomaya or sensory sheath, vignanamaya or cognitive sheath, anandamaya or joyous state.

Panchangam: Traditional almanac which has five divisions.

Panchavarna: The five traditional colours green, red, blue, yellow, and white.

Paramamaitram: One of the benefits of vaastu, which means great friendship. Refers to the spiritual connection of a person and the gods.

Paramasayee padam: A diagram with eighty-one modules.

Paramaatman: The Supreme Spirit also known as Brahman.

Paryaaya: Arrangement order, repetition.

Patola: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Paushtikam: Promoting growth. A type of proportion.

Pechaka padam: A diagram with four modules.

Peetha padam: A diagram with nine modules.

Pingala nadi: The energy line on the right within the subtle body.

Pitru: One of the gods of the land located in the SW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Pootana: One of the gods of the land located in the SW corner of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Praakaara beejam: The seed of the sacred precinct. It stands for the primary module of the entire temple layout.

Praana: Breath, vitality, principle of life.

Praanic: Of praana, concerned with breath.

Pradakshina: Moving round in a clockwise direction.

Prakriti: Natural condition, the personified will of the Supreme Spirit.

Prapancha: Manifestation, the visible world or universe.

Prasada: The built form.

Pratiharanam: Repelling, avoiding.

Pratima: Image, statue.

Preshya: A servant, servitude.

Puja: Worship.

Punarvasu: The seventh star in the zodiac belt which appears under Mithuna or Gemini.

Purusha: Male, supreme being.

Purusha prakriti: Supreme Being and manifested form of the universe, male and female principle.

Purvabhadrapada: The twenty-fifth star in the zodiac belt which appears under Mina or Pisces.

Purvaphalguni: The eleventh star in the zodiac belt which appears under Simha or Leo.

Purvashada: The twenty-fifth star in the zodiac belt which appears under Dhanur or Sagittarius.

Pusan: One of the gods of the land located in the southern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Pushpadanta: One of the gods of the land located in the western sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Pushya: The eighth star in the zodiac belt which appears under Kataka or Cancer.

Raga: Feeling, colour, melody.

Rajasa: One of the three guna or qualities which stands for passion and movement.

Rama: One of the manifestations of Lord Vishnu.

Ramayana: One of the great epics of India, literally, 'the coming of Rama'.

Ramya: Spiritual delight, pleasure, fortunate, charming, gratifying.

Rasa: Sap, flavour, emotion as in nine types or navarasa.

Ratha: Carriage, chariot.

Ravi: Epithet for the Sun.

Revathi: The twenty-seventh star in the zodiac belt, which appears under the sign of Mina or Pisces.

Rig Veda: The most important of the Hindu texts.

Roga: One of the gods of the land located in the NW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Rohini: Fourth star in the zodiac belt which appears under the sign of Vrishabha or Taurus.

Rudra: One of the gods of the land located in the NW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Sadhakam: Accomplishment, efficiency, skill. One of the benefits of vaastu calculation.

Sadhana: Inward discipline and vigour.

Saguna: Possessed of good qualities.

Sahasrara chakra: The last or the seventh of the subtle levels of the body.

Sakala: Whole, complete, entire. In the field of vaastu it is taken to mean morphic form.

Sambrani: This is a Tamil word for an incense from the resin of a tree. It is used to cleanse a place of poisonous gases.

Sampatti: Prosperity, success, excellence abundance. One of the benefits of vaastu calculation.

Samprapti: Attainment, acquisition, renown.

Samvriddhi: Growth, prosperity.

Sanatana dharma: Eternal ancient, permanent religion or practice. This is was the original name for Hinduism.

Sangeeta: Music.

Sanskriti: Refinement, culture.

Śanyasin: Sage, one who has renounced temporal concerns.

Sapta kanya: The seven celestial maidens, who according to Indian mythology protected and nurtured Lord Kartikeya.

Sarja: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Sarshapa: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Sarvatobhadra: A chaturmukha design with projections oh all four sides, and verandahs all around.

Sarvakaamikam: A type of proportion that is capable of achieving everything.

Satchit ananda: Existence, knowledge and joy.

Satvika: True, good, quality of goodness.

Satya: True, genuine, real, virtuous.

Satyaka: One of the gods of the land located in the eastern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Savindra: One of the gods of the land located in the SE sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Shadayadi: Six types of beneficial calculations.

Shadritu: Six types of seasons.

Shakti: Power, capability, strength, energy.

Shani: Saturn.

Shatataraka: The twenty-fourth star in the zodiac belt which appears under the sign of Kumbha or Aquarius.

Shikharam: The top, summit, the crest of a temple.

Shilpam: Sculpture, art or craft, creation of form.

Shilpa shastra: Treatise or text dealing with sculpture.

Shilpin: Artist, craftsman.

Shivam: Bliss, final beatitude.

Shivam shakti: Bliss and energy, stillness and movement.

Shosha: One of the gods of the land located in the NW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Shraddha: Commitment, attentiveness, respect.

Shruk: Spoon used for pouring ghee into the sacrificial fire.

Shubham: Auspiciousness, prosperity.

Shukra: Venus

Shvanam: Dog.

Siddham: Valid, sound, propitious, sanctified.

Siddhi: Complete attainment.

Simha: Lion.

Sita: The wife of Lord Rama in the Ramayana. She is also seen as the human manifestation of Lakshmi the consort of Lord Vishnu.

Sneha: Affection, tenderness, friendship.

Soma: One of the gods of the land located in the northern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Sookshma: Subtle, atomic, minute.

Sravana: The twenty-second star in the zodiac, which appears under the sign of Makara or Capricorn.

Srishthi: Creation, the act of creating.

Srivatsam: A mark or mole on the chest of Vishnu.

Sri Yantra: A mystic diagram representing the goddess which forms a part of worship.

Sthandila padam: A diagram with forty-nine modules.

Sthoola: Gross, material.

Stupa: A Buddhist monument.

Stupi: The finial on top of a temple.

Sugriva: One of the gods of the land located in the SW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Sukha darsham: Aesthetics, pleasing appearance.

Sukham: Happiness, joyfulness.

Susumna nadi: The energy line in the centre within the subtle body.

Svadhisthana chakra: The second of the subtle levels of the body, located at the level of lower abdomen.

Svetasvatara Upanishad: One of the 108 Upanishads which is part of the Vedas or theological texts of Hinduism.

Swaathi: The fifteenth star in zodiac, which appears under the sign of Tula or Libra.

Swami Vivekananda: One of the great yogis of the twentieth century.

Swanubhavam: Self-experience, self-knowledge.

Swastikam: A mystical symbol, with four lines creating a clockwise spiral design.

Taala: Rhythm, timing, order.

Tamasa: One of the three guna or qualities which stands for darkness, ignorance.

Tantric: Of tantra, or derived from tantra.

Taitiriya Upanishad: One of the 108 Upanishads which is part of the Vedas or theological texts of Hinduism.

Tantra: Religious practice dealing with magical and mystical rites.

Taskaran: A thief, robber.

Tirumandiram: Tamil text dealing with yoga and the process of acquiring spiritual powers.

Trapusa: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Tri: Three.

Triguna: Three characteristics.

Trimurti: Three gods, trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara.

Trisala: A building with three wings.

Tula: Libra.

Uditi: One of the gods of the land located in the northern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Ugrapitha padam: A diagram with thirty-six modules.

Upanishad: Knowledge derived from sitting at the feet of the preceptor. A part of the Vedas or theological texts of Hinduism.

Upapitha padam: A diagram with twenty-five modules.

Utrabhadrapada: The twenty-sixth star in the zodiac belt which appears under the sign of Minam or Pisces.

Utraphalguni: The twelfth star in the zodiac belt which appears under the Kanya or Virgo.

Utrashada: The twenty-first star in the zodiac belt which appears under the sign of Makara or Capricorn.

Vaaram: Week.

Valmiki: One of the great sages of this land. He is the author of Ramayana.

Vaastu devata: God of the land, epithet of Vaastu Purusha.

Vaastu muhurtam: The auspicious time when the Vaastu

Purusha is awake and building activity can be commenced.

Vaastu nathan: Epithet of Vaastu Purusha.

Vaastu purusha: God of the land.

Vaastu purusha mandala: The mystic diagram of the site with the Vaastu Purusha contained within a grid.

Vaastu Shastra: The treatise pertaining to the built form.

Vaastu vignanama: The science of building.

Vachaka: One of the herbs used in fumigation of a built space.

Vadha: Killing, destruction.

Vahni: Agni, the god of fire.

Vaidya: Healer.

Vamsa moolam: Back bone. In the building the front/rear entries which forms an axis is called the backbone.

Vana mahotsavam: A ceremony performed to celebrate the planting of trees.

Vardhamana: Growing, increasing.

Varuna: One of the gods of the land located in the western sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Vastu: Substance, matter.

Vayu: One of the gods of the land located in the NW sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Vedanta: Refers to the Upanishads, which are considered the 'end of the Veda'.

Vedas: There are four major scriptural texts of Hinduism. They are Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva.

Veeryam: Heroism, prowess.

Veethi: Street.

Vidaari: One of the gods of the land located in the SE corner of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Vimana: The tower structure erected above the sanctum.

Vinaayaka: One of the gods of the Hindu Pantheon. He is the older son of Lord Shiva and has the head of an elephantine. Another name for Ganesha.

Vipatti: Calamity, misfortune.

Viruvaakshi: A type of flower.

Vishaka: The sixteenth star in the zodiac which appears under the sign of Vrichika or Scorpio.

Vishnu: One of the trinity in the Hindu pantheon. He is the lord of preservation.

Vishwa atma: Universal Spirit.

Vishwa purusha: Universal Being.

Visuddhi chakra: Fifth of the subtle levels of the body, located at the level of the throat.

Viswa beejam: Universal seed, cosmic seed.

Vitatha: One of the gods of the land located in the southern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Vivaswant: One of the gods of the land located in the southern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Vivekachoodamani: One of the theological texts written by Adi Shankara.

Vrichika: Scorpio.

Vrishabha: Taurus.

Vyaya: Expenditure.

Yama: One of the gods of the land located in the southern sector of the vaastu purusha mandala.

Yamaloka: The land of the dead.

Yantra: Machine, mystical diagram.

Yoga: Union, endeavour, meditation, a practice which prepares and purifies the mental and physical system so that the individual becomes more refined and sensitive.

Yogam: Consequence, result, opportunity.

Yogi: One who has practiced yoga and attained a certain level of skill, sensitivity and power.

Yoni: Womb, female sexual organ, used in vaastu to mean the orientation of the building.

Yugma: Even number.

# Reference List

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*The cover shows Vaastu Purusha, reigning deity of the earth*
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